1955

UA37/44 Tidbits of Kentucky Folklore

Gordon Wilson

ORIGINALS

TIDBITS OF KENTUCKY FOLKLORE

By

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Vol. VII
Nos. 1050 - 1200

Missing: ~~#1084 p. 2~~, 1106, 1107, 1108

"COME HERE, JUNIOR"

The faithful old colored woman who does odd jobs at my house has always called my son Little Gordon, much to the amusement of my children. It was rather appropriate when the boy was small, but since he has reached full manhood and six feet three, the name seems out of place. I have tried to explain to my students that Little as a title was the form I knew at Fidelity; I had never heard Junior until long after my own childhood. Very dignified people have even called my son Young Gordon, another old-time designation that suggests to most listeners a quaint old story of early New England, like Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown." As I now recall, there were a good many boys named for their fathers at Fidelity. All sorts of terminology were used to separate the younger from the older person with the same name, Little being most common. Some names lent themselves to diminutives, however, and still do: if the father was named John, it was quite natural to call his son Johnny; William's or Bill's son became Willie or Billy. One old lady at Fidelity spoke of her grandson's wife as "my Bill's William's wife." That is round-about enough, I hope.

In many of the languages of the world there are patronymics--that is, names derived from the name of the parent. Generally it is the father's first name, with a prefix or suffix that denotes son. My own last name is a good Scandinavian illustration of that, as the original Wilsons in Scotland were descended from the Vikings (brave, high-sounding name for pirates) who settled there in the ninth and later centuries. Mc prefixed to a name is the Scotch-Gaelic way of showing the same relationship. In Old English times there were several ways of making patronymics: adding ing or ins or just s, as in Hastings, Owens, Johns. Under French influence Fitz came into use(derived from fils, French for son): Fitzgibbon,

Fitzsimmons, Fitzgerald, etc. Among the Scandinavians it is even a known use to add the word ~~to~~ daughter, so that a man named Hans could have a daughter known as Hans' daughter. This list could be prolonged indefinitely, as people of all languages feel fairly safe when they name the son for his father, while it is a bit risky to name him for some idol of the time. Try as he may, he cannot escape being his own father's son, however he might writhe to be reminded of his name for some politician or movie hero or warrior or character in a novel.

It is common practice now to write II or III or even IV after a name long used in a family, though there is no sure way of knowing whether the III stands for the third generation in an unbroken line or merely a third generation name. To be exact, "my Bill's William," of whom I spoke earlier, could have written his name William III, as proudly as an English monarch. The rest of us called him Willie, his father Will, his grandfather Billy.

When Junior got to be used for the name of a boy who bore his father's name, some of the children whom I knew were greatly puzzled. My nephew Albert, Junior, was known to many children as "the little Junior boy." I suppose that they thought his surname was Junior. One family in Warren county named a child Mary Junior, not for her mother, whose name was Sarah or some such name, but, according to the mother, "for the little Smith boy." That reminds me of the children at Fidelity who used to speak of Mr. Joe Montgomery and his neighbor, Mr. Doctor Wilson(my father). Mr. as a title was all-inclusive; other titles had to to be subordinate. But don't forget Herr Doktor in German or Monsieur le Cure in French. Maybe we should be numbered or lettered, as was a family with whom my wife used to go to school: A, B, and so on through G. I suppose the second generation then would automatically be called A prime or A square. What's in a name? Don't ask me.

"SHE'S BEEN ABOUT"

Once at a party up the creek above Fidelity some middle-aged women were discussing the looks and bearing of the girls present. Someone praised one girl for her ease of manner. The aunt-in-law of the girl said, with a great degree of finality: "She's been about." That settled it; what else could you say? Maybe I had better explain this old term, for it may not be known to you as it was to us at Fidelity. When ten miles was a "fur piece," anyone who had been farther from home than that was a world traveler. The young woman in question had visited, once, in Paducah, some fifty miles away; once she had gone for a day or two to Memphis, so far away that I still do not know how far it must have been. In addition, she had associated with people who were people, not merely the crude country people such as the ones assembled on Sunday morning at Sulphur Springs Church. She had seen society, had dined a time or two at a hotel, had ridden in a rubber-tired buggy! In some words well known at Fidelity, she had "stepped out." However, that word more often meant that some available man was looking for a wife.

About a dozen of the people whom I knew well when I was a child had seen a wide range of the earth. The woman who said that her niece had been about had accompanied her husband to Chicago to the 1893 World's Fair. She, too, had been about, and she did not let you forget it. Our tobacco salesman, whom we looked at weeks ago, had wandered all over western Kentucky, Western Tennessee, Southern Illinois, and had even been across the Mississippi River into far-away Missouri! And he did not hesitate to start a sentence like this: "One day when I was at Carbondale, Illinois." That sounded almost as casual as my recent student who casually started a sen-

tence with these words: "One day when I was flying over the North Pole." The other students looked at him questioningly, but with only a fraction of the wonder that we country bumpkins felt when our own drummer spoke of places far away.

And then there was our next neighbor, who is still alive and well at ninety-four. He had gone to the Panhandle of Texas and lived for some time, back before I could remember. We listened to his jack rabbit, rattlesnake, sagebrush stories with wide-open eyes but secretly felt that he was kidding us merely because we had not been about. Such distances as he mentioned just could not be. We could look from our own yard and see hills three or four miles away; imagine seeing forty miles away! Why, that would be four times as far away as the distant county seat. Not more than one out of twenty grown people whom we knew had ever been that far away. I myself had never been more than fifteen miles away before I was eighteen, even though I had been about considerably. Puryear, Tennessee, was the extent of my far-wandering, to use a fine old word from our earliest English epic, BEOWULF. Just how big was the world, anyway, that our neighbor could see forty miles of it in all directions?

Just before I left Fidelity, my cousin, who had recently been clear to California, came to visit us and took a whole evening telling us of his adventure. He had traveled by train, with stop-overs, clear to the end of creation. He had seen mountains more than fourteen thousand feet high(The highest point in the Jackson Purchase is less than 500 feet.), he had taken a ride on a ship to Catalina Island and had got seasick, he had thrown snowballs in mid-summer on one of his mountain excursions. Ulysses at the court of the Phaeacians could not have had a better audience; we doubted some of his stories, but, with my geography book to check up on him, I could truly say that he had been about! Ulysses had come home.

THE OLD ROAD

When I am going somewhere, and have not much time, I prefer to head down a modern highway and step on the gas. But when I am in no hurry, I dearly love to linger over a country road or even to park my car and walk down what used to be a road but is now growing up in vegetation since the modern new highway, some rods away, is taking all the traffic. Between the spring semester and the summer term this year I had two experiences with old roads that left strange memories in my mind. I drove, carefully and guardedly, over one old road but was able to trace only on foot some yards of another one, both roads alive with history and romance.

One of the neglected places in Kentucky is Glen Lilly, the home of General Simon Bolivar Buckner, famous in the Civil and Mexican Wars, governor of Kentucky, prominent business man, and father of Simon Bolivar Buckner, Jr., who died gallantly in World War II. The fine old log mansion lies two miles off the main road and is reached by a sort of road or trail that meanders through fields and around the hills. The old house, much the worse for wear, stands in the midst of great trees, set out long ago by loving hands. Near by is an ancient oak, which must have been fair-sized when the grandfather of the Civil War general came "out to Kentucky" in 1803. Along what used to be the driveway circling the house stand trees that still make an impressive approach to the old house. Dimly traced across the lawn is the carriageway that led up to the porch itself, but it must have been a generation since any carriage has rolled over that section of driveway. Nobody was around except my partner and me as we walked around over the grounds, he fresh from extensive research in the history of the Buckner family. We spoke in low tones to keep from disturbing ancient spirits that might be hovering near, and then we retraced our long, winding trail back to the modern

highway and to the neglected forts that used to guard the important railroad that ran across the Green River country. Somehow, that long, winding drive through the fields and woods made the deepest impression of the whole day. The road, like the old mansion, had seen better days, had once been the vital connection between the great old farm and the outside world. Fortunately, it was not raining; otherwise we might not have found the old road so poetic and full of memories.

A few days later in the same week I spent some hours at or near the Meriwether Lewis National Historical Monument, near Hohenwald, Tennessee. Lewis lies buried by the side of the old Natchez Trace, several evidences of which are still plainly visible. There he had come on October 11, 1809, on his way to Washington; at some time in the night he had been shot, either by himself or by somebody else. There he was buried the next day, within a few feet of the famous old road; years later the state of Tennessee erected the impressive monument over his remains; still later the national government bought three hundred acres of land around the monument and made the property into a national historical monument. Now the proposed Natchez Trace Parkway is planned to come by this great spot, in some ways the most distinctive place along its long stretch from Nashville to Natchez. The new way will be broad and well engineered; thousands will stop at the shrine, which was so lonely and silent when I was there. I wonder how many will stand, as my partner and I did, and wonder at the old road, which grew up from an old buffalo trail and an Indian trace; which saw not only Lewis but also such notables as Andrew Jackson and the immensely-popular Davy Crockett on their way from wars with the Creeks; which was put into poetry by Alexander Wilson in 1810, when he wandered alone down the old road for its full length and wrote the first accurate account of Lewis's death and also left money to fence in the lonely grave. It was noon when I was on the old trace, but I could see spirits of dead Indians and soldiers and raftsmen and other travellers.

WHERE ARE THE BLUEBIRDS?

In all the years that I have studied birds as a hobby the most common question asked me has been "Where are the Bluebirds?" When I explain carefully, often giving figures, that the Bluebirds are still here and are as numerous as ever, I get a blank stare or a queer look of lack of belief. Long ago I learned not to feel offended at this attitude, for it is a perfectly natural one for many people to have. You see, most of the ones who ask me such questions were reared in the country and have moved to town. Because they do not see Bluebirds as they used to, they assume that the Bluebirds and not they have changed. Ever since 1918 I have taken an annual Christmas Bird Census, which has been published in AUDUBON FIELD NOTES, along with hundreds of other censuses from all parts of the country. I have just looked over my thirty-seven counts and found that I found, on the average, around 35 Bluebirds a day count. One year I found 117 and have often gone as high as 60 in one day. Where are the Bluebirds? They are still here and have varied very little since I first began my studies. It is true that along in the mid-nineties a great many Bluebirds died from severe weather and thus were for a short time not up to their usual numbers, but the 1890's were a long time ago, considerably longer than the memories of most people who ask me about Bluebirds.

Just today someone asked me about dog fennel, in the same tone of voice that others have asked about Bluebirds. My answer was the same. Dog fennel is still here, as many acres of it, especially around rich-soiled barnyards. I could have taken my inquisitor today to places where the plants are more than knee-high right now and in full bloom. In fact, in just the lasy few days I have driven by farms where the odor of dog fennel pervaded the whole atmosphere. Like the man who spoke to me, I like dog fennel and am sure that it would be a cultivated plant if it were as rare as orchids. I can imagine aristocratic ladies showing

this exotic plant to admiring gardxn club members. I recall that a red flowered variety of dog fennel used to be grown by just such a lady at Fidelity, and all of us, used as we were to the common barnyard species, raved over the odd cultivated variety, just as we raved over her stramonium, a cultivated species or variety of jimpson weed// Frankly, jimpson flowers are very pretty and suffer only because they are so common and have never been coddled by a connoisseur of flowers.

The thing that amuses me most about these questions about Bluebirds and dog fennel is that my home town is small, with excellent farm lands all around. Two minutes in a car would take any of my questioners into Bluebird or dog fennel territory. Maybe, in our growing up from a rural to an urban people, we have grown faster in some ways than in others. Some of my friends of big cities are avid about country birds and plants and are as much at home in the fields as they are in their city streets. Many of them have never lived in the country but havelearned how to see and know natural landscapes and plants and animals. Others, some of them not too long from the country, seem never to have seen distinctly rural things or seem to have forgotten the smell of freshly-turned soil, the sound of Whip-poor-wills at nightfall, the taste of sheep sorrel and wild plums. It has been almost a half century since I lived in the country, but my hobby has kept me aware of even remote places all that time. I do not have mud on my boots that I brought from Fidelity in 1906; those old shoes disappeared ages ago. But I do have mud on my boots from yesyerday afternoon, when I walked around a wet-weather pond, a ten-minute drive from my house. ,aybe we need to keep in mind how close, geographically and mentally, we are to where we came from. Fidelity is a hundred miles and more, air line, from my house; but the conditions that made and still keep Fidelity are within throwing distance. And all this is a parable of how close we are to our folk origins, how near at hand is the past and its customs, how much a part of our daily lives are the events of unrecorded years that have meant so much to our being what we are.

OUR PET BELIEFS

When I was camping at Mammoth Cave National Park in the spring of this year, my nearest neighbor on the campground was a fine-looking, well-dressed man in early middle life who was on his way back north after a winter in Florida. He used good English, he showed remarkable knowledge of agriculture and living conditions, even though he admitted having never lived in the country. The cavernous limestone area particularly intrigued him, with the strange underground rivers and mysterious caves. And right there I found out his pet folk belief. In speaking of how the farmers in the limestone area manage to get sufficient water for their farms, I mentioned water witches. At once he indicated that he believed in them implicitly. I avoided saying anything very flat, for I wanted to get his viewpoint. He was fairly bristling with instances where people whom he knew had been able to find unfailing sources of water in the most unexpected places. He made no pretense to be a water witch himself, but it was all too plain that the Law and the Gospel were no more sacred in his mind than these finders of underground streams. I chatted on and on with him, trying to see how a man so well educated, so widely-traveled, so well-to-do financially could still fall for such folk beliefs. I hope that he did not know that I was pumping him, not to make a spectacle of him but to understand, if possible, the folk point of view that often persists in strange places. I wonder whether most of us are not also kindly disposed to some form of folk belief that we except from the body of folk beliefs and, at the same time, whether we do not pride ourselves on our breadth of view, our remoteness from the folk.

Before my town got its present sewer system, people resorted to underground caves for the disposal of sewage. In general, it is easy in any part of town to dig down through the soil and find a crevice or even a cave that will take away the water from a septic tank. I suspect that ten such places could be found within a hundred feet of my study, where I am writing this article. Only a few feet away on the lot next to mine

there is a cave that was so big that part of it used to be walled up for a cistern when a former owner ran a large stable of race horses. Long before I bought my place, the cistern top fell in, and most people did not know that it had been a cave. Quite by accident I rediscovered this fact and thus found a place to dispose of the sewage of my house and the one next door until the sewer system was installed. And yet, with caves a dime a dozen, when I employed a man to dig a sink for me, some years before that time, he would not touch a pick or shovel until he had had the place water-witched. He employed a youngish colored man, who paced around over my lot and the vacant one next to it for a whole afternoon, switch in hand. Backwards and forwards he went, the switch cutting shines over a certain place. Mathematically he worked it out by taking other lines that would intersect this same one; a stake was finally driven down in the spot where the wonderful sink would be found. A hole, drilled through the top layer of rock, struck a layer of softer rock; the digger said that this was it. He built a septic tank over it, hooked up my sewer to it, and went away feeling "powerful big." But I didn't. That sink, found with such artistry, was a perpetual headache. Of course, it would take away some drainage, as any limestone formation hereabouts will do. But there was never enough opening in those rocks to care for the sewage. When a new house was to be erected on that vacant lot, the first blast set off in the limestone tore into my puny little crevice, and all the water ran out into the prospective basement. It was then that I refound that old cave and its ancient cistern. Just what had happened to the man with the switch I do not know. He is probably still sashaying across yards, switch in hand, looking as wise as he did the afternoon he found, to the delight of the man who was to dig my sink, the infallible crevice or cave. Maybe my watching him that afternoon was worth some of the ill-spent money that the sink demanded from time to time until it was superseded by a more sure-fire sewer line to an actual cave and, later, to a sewer line in the city street.

TKC

HOW WE SPEAK

It amuses me to hear some people speak of Kentucky as if every person from Pike County to the Mississippi River talked the same way. To any one who has traveled a little over the state it is very obvious that our speaking varies almost as much as our geology. Some years ago I went on a camping trip across Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, Montana, Idaho, and Washington without finding as wide a variation in speech as can be found within thirty miles of Bowling Green. Many writers speak of Kentuckians as speakers of pure Elizabethan English, without the slightest idea of what Elizabethan English would sound like. It is true that some of our areas, the mountains among them, have preserved many old words that were brought over by the early settlers, but these same words are in no sense peculiar to our mountains. Nearly every county in the state would show most of the same words, in varying numbers. Remote neighborhoods of a few years ago were likely to have kept some of these words, but they do not in any way represent a large part of the vocabulary, even of the most remote. An occasional word of this sort usually gets far more attention than it deserves and makes some observers jump to the conclusion that all other "Elizabethan" words are to be found.

Another sort of inaccurate observer thinks that Kentucky talks a broad Southern dialect. That is fully as laughable as our Elizabethan English. It is probable that not more than ten per cent of the people of the state talk what could be identified as Southern by any careful student of language. Time and again I have heard outsiders speak of having heard such interesting Southern words or expressions or tones in Kentucky, when every illustration given would be just as valid for Indiana, Illinois, or Ohio as for Kentucky. Many times these so-called Southernisms are merely family variations in speech. I can recall that at Fidelity there were many people who outdid some of the New Englanders in their

long o's or au's. Our nearest neighbor pronounced sausage as if it were spelled sossidge. Another neighbor shortened his i's so much that his pronunciation of dime sounded like damn. And yet both of them were just one generation away from North Carolina, with no earthly knowledge of or cultural connection with New England or the northern Middle West.

Leaving out of account mere families that may have moved into any region, we have in Kentucky some fairly well-defined speech areas, based on vocabulary and sounds. The older people of the mountains have certain sounds that are not so well known elsewhere; probably the chief thing in mountain speech is the speech pattern rather than the actual sounds. The towns along the Ohio have a speech, in general, that is approximately that of the southern parts of the states immediately north of us--Middle Western tinged with Southern. Down below Russellville, Elkton, and Hopkinsville there is a section where most people really speak Southern, much as it is spoken much farther south. In between the Ohio River area and this "island of the Old South" most people talk very much alike, with a little more Southern tone than is found along the Ohio, though strongly leaning toward what I call for want of a better term Southern Middle Western. Much of the Jackson Purchase has a speech that differs considerably from the Pennyrile speech. Since I was reared down in the Purchase, I became familiar with this form of speech first of all and have long tried to figure out why it is different. My own conclusion is that it represents North Carolina influence rather than Virginia influence and may be more Scotch-Irish than any other Kentucky speech.

With education, travel, and the radio our differences are fast being ironed out, so that another generation will wonder why older people noticed that a person from Pineville, let us say, said his words slightly differently from a person from Henderson or Bowling Green or Paducah. With the survey of our speech that is now being carried on, it will not be too long until we can definitely say where these lines between one dialect and another can be drawn with some degree of accuracy, though such a line will never be as definite as Muldraugh's Hill or the Tennessee River.

STYLE AND HUMANITARIANISM

When some dear old lady reminds me, rather forcibly, that the days of ladies has passed, that all present-day women are hard and cold-blooded, I begin to think of some of the styles that used to be used by ladies. One old lady, who declared that our age is a cold, unfeeling one, boasted to me that when she was a young woman, her beau gave her a necklace made of Catbird eggs. Her eyes brightened, for she remembered that this necklace was the finest thing in her community, making her the envied of all the young ladies. I tried to stifle my disgust and managed to get away without saying how silly, not to say brutal, the young swain was and how idiotic his sweetheart was.

Going to a meeting of women used to smack of visiting a zoo, a dead one at that. Feathers that had once graced egrets and many other graceful birds wiggled and glanced in the breeze, or when vigorous heads nodded. I am not old enough to remember when the Carolina Paroquet gave up its life to adorn My Lady's hat. But the ceaseless slaughter of this quaint little parrot finally accomplished what no lady ever would have expected: the whole race was exterminated. The fearless little fellow was fond of salt water; hunters gathered around salt licks and salt springs and killed to their heart's content and to the comfortable inflation of their purses. Ladies who would not have dared wring a chicken's neck, even to grace the dinner table when the preacher was to be the guest, wore the gaudy green and yellow feathers of the parrot and felt infinitely raised above the common run of women who could not afford such expensive hat-trimmings. For in the later days of the Carolina Paroquet a good skin would have brought the quivalent of four or five days labor on the farm by the most industrious farm hand.

The wearing of aigrettes, the plumes of the American or Snowy Egrets, was very distinctive--and expensive. In my earliest days you could buy a full set of plumes from the hunter for 50 or 60 cents. After the protectors of bird life stepped in and it became dangerous to face officers, the price often went up to $10 a set. Meanwhile the bird had become so scarce that it was not easy to make ready money by killing this stately bird. Like the fearless little Carolina Paroquet, the American Egret and its smaller cousin, the Snowy, would stand guard at their nests, utterly refusing to abandon their young. Ammunition was expensive, and bloody feathers were not wanted; hence it became the rule to climb a tree in a rookery of the egrets and hit the guarding parent on the head to make useless the sharp bill. Then a deft stroke of a sharp knife would remove the head and breast or back plumes without shedding too much blood that might ruin the feathers. The bird, bereft of its feathers and often still dazed from the blow on its head, was left to die from starvation and vermin. Far away and many dollars between this brutal act and the hat, the plumes appeared on the hat, bringing distinction to the wearer and a flatness to the pocketbook.

And there was another side to all this that My Lady would not have approved of for words: many an officer lost his life while trying, legally and fairly, to protect rookeries from desperate hunters. The open season on game wardens lasted all the year in some parts of America, merely because women wanted the skins of beautiful and even vanishing birds to wear on their hats. And yet the same women were often, too often, too chicken-hearted to watch hog-killing or to chop off the head of a fowl for Sunday dinner.

Thinking about it more than a half century later, I have come to believe that my greatest joy in leaving home, even with the strangeness of the world into which I went, was the chance to make whatever friends I pleased and not to have friends merely because they lived near. You see, my being a doctor's son brought me into contact, pleasant and otherwise, with everybody. For most of the numerous people who came to our house to see the doctor--and eat Mother's victuals--I had genuine respect and was able to regard them in a friendly manner. Not to have done otherwise would have branded me as badly raised. One overt act of mistreating any of the numerous people who came would have subjected me to a paddling when I was smaller and a talk, much worse than a paddling, when I was older. Though I was no saint, I kept silence and endured. But away back in my life there was a feeling of disgust that I had to have my own life so broken up merely because some people were sick. Again, I did not dare say anything like this, for it would have been punished at once. It was fine to be a big enough boy to work in the field and thus escape some of my unwanted company, but there was no easy escape on Sunday. It seems now that that was the day when the most people came to see the doctor, especially along about mealtime. Mother fed enough such callers to balance anything that Father could collect. After all, there was not much to collect except work, and that entailed on Mother again the task of feeding the workers. When I was barely thirteen, I began to wander around alone on Sunday afternoons, partly to see, like the bear that went round the mountain, "what I could see," but partly, too, to remain alone. The unsocial phase of this conduct was bad, I know, but what I escaped was often worse. Hence, I soon found out, when I left home, that I could make my own friends and not have to have them handed to me, to be entertained and fed. It was not until I had been away from home for a good many

with a jeans quilt in the back for the children to sit on, what more could you wish? After the parents had acquired more elegant accommodations, the teen-age youngsters often utilized the old farm wagon by getting up a party to go miles across country to some outlandish church, with dinner on the ground and meeting all day as a drawing feature. Many a brat that I knew, who would have wept bitterly if Pappy had not bought a buggy, gladly piled into the farm wagon for a skylarking up the creek, under the name of going to church.

The buggy, long the badge of respectability, finally arrived for most Fidedity families. All the first ones I knew had strong steel tires and needed them for our rough roads. Only in my last years in Fidelity did the rubber-tired buggy, that stylish vehicle of the fairly-well-off, arrive. Even in my very last year at Fidelity it was a rare grown-up who owned such a stylish carriage; he left such worldliness to younger bucks. Only a few of our Fidelity people had graduated into the surrey for the whole family, with outriders on various mounts. But the few surreys conferred honors that no kind of vehicle could add today. It was usually church services that brought the surrey out, but the tenth commandment, with its warning against covetousness, was violated every Sunday morning when Mr. Monroe drove up with his matched team hitched to his surrey "with the fringe on the top," very much as if he had driven right out of the pages of the later OKLAHOMA. And another commandment, hardly expressed in these words, was violated, too: "Thou shalt not strut." Nothing gave a feeling of being able to strut like being in a fine carriage.

When I was driving our old family nag to the family buggy, along in 1913, and met a noisy automobile, I should have known that the finest carriage that I knew at Fidelity had seen its last prominence. Maybe that was the very reason that Old Mag reared up and walked on her hind legs just like a circus horse; she and the family buggy had served out their usefulness and their being symbols of style.

Carlyle makes much in one of his essays of the distinction given an Englishman because he owned a gig, a two-wheeled carriage that was once pretty stylish, a sort of English one-horse shay. As it was used in Carlyle's writing, it meant that the person was placed by being called a gigman; socially and in every other way that showed that he had got up a certain distance in the world. But today, like Francois Villon's "snows of yesteryear," where are the gigs and the gigmen?

I have found it nearly impossible to tell my younger friends how society used to be stratified by some such things as the vehicle driven, so stratified that it was a step downward if some girl married a boy who could not drive as fine a rig as did her father. Looking back at Fidelity, the little world that was such a miniature picture of the whole social system, I find that there were several strata of people, as judged by ~~their system~~ vehicles.

First of all, there were those who could not afford a carriage and who had to ride horseback or walk wherever they went. They were few in number, but nearly every neighborhood had some of them. When we started out to the county seat, we might find some such waiting by the roadside, ready to accept a ride to town and sure to be on hand in the afternoon to get a ride back home. Some of the ladies of this stratum did ride horseback elegantly, almost as elegantly as did the young women who could go in vehicles if they wanted to.

The next step up was the farm wagon, plenty good enough for most people until they could do better. Many families that I knew never outgrew the farm wagon, partly because they did not have the money to buy another vehicle and partly because they saved their money for a rainy day that may or may not have arrived later. With a spring seat or two for the older members of the family and with straw covered

years that I could look back on it all and not feel positively angry.

I appreciated, then and now, the unannounced arrival of friends and neighbors. We did not stand on ceremony, and there were hosts of our neighbors who were as welcome as our dearest relatives would have been. A mere caller, who obviously timed his call to include the noon dinner, would have been hardly noticeable, but day by day the undesirables piled in until there was hardly an hour, except behind a plow, that a country boy could call his own. I know it is the custom of writers to tell about the loneliness of country boys in the days before telephones and cars and radios; someone ought to write about the life of the goldfish-like boy who could hardly be alone in his dreams. I wonder, in the world as it is now constituted, how the spongers and their descendants fare. Dinner on the ground is pretty rare now; miscellaneous going home from church seems to be less known that formerly. Maybe there is some way by which the hungry ones can get a square meal.

One of my former students and I have often discussed this miscellaneous hospitality that was so badly abused. A little of it was to be expected and even wanted. The unknown traveler was likely to bring some news, true or false, from the world beyond our hills. He might have felt that his entertaining us was part of his duty as a non-paying guest. I still remember some of the fine yarns I learned from such transients. But, to save my life, I do not remember anything about Mother's very fat distant cousin who sponged off us to keep from paying a hotel bill, even though he was a tobacco buyer. The fact that he was Mother's sixth cousin, had grown up in the same community with her, and had fought in the Civil War with her brothers seemed enough for him to put up with us whenever he came into the Fidelity section. There was no earthly idea that any of us would ever return the visit, for the old man was a bachelor and had no permanent home; he was Mr. Spomge of the early ~~days~~/days at Fidelity.

Last week I left poor Old Mag, our family nag, rearing and plunging at the sight and sound and smell of an automobile as I was escorting my new wife out to Fidelity for a first look at my folks and my community. Poor Old Mag died of old age not many years after that, maybe an age hastened by the realization that her time and her importance had come to an end. Old family nags and old family buggies are now museum pieces; it would hardly be safe for them on the remotest country road, even if the old critter had overcome her fear of new-fangled contraptions that can run without horse power—at least visible horse power.

Once, many years ago, I had been out on one of my numerous early-morning bird hikes, one early-spring day. I was down by the river when a steamboat, loaded to the water line, it seemed, with happy excursionists, was on its way down Barren River for the day. I had known boats for a long time and had come to accept them as a necessary part of the society in which I found myself. Later I looked back and remembered that that boatload of happy young people and the requisite number of adult sponsors was the last of the excursions by big boat I was ever to see on our winding, picturesque stream. I did make a steamboat trip or two after this through dire necessity, but the day of excursions had passed. Some of my most romantic memories cluster around the boat excursions that my college used to spnnsor every spring; there had been nothing more memorable. But an age had come to an end, suddenly and apparently with no fanfare.

Not too long ago, in this very year, there were weeks when no trains ran past my town because of a strike. And yet life went on remarkably well, for in the years since automobiles came in, we have learned to depend upon trucks for much of our transportation. So

far as passenger travel was concerned, those who needed to go elsewhere went by private car, by bus, or by plane. And when the strike was over, though heavy freight trains rolled by again, the few passenger trains would let off at our good-sized little city not half as many people as used to alight from the local train. Twanty-two passenger trains that used to run by here daily or were made up here are now reduced to a dozen or so. We no longer set our watches by the arrival or departure of No. 6 or No. 9. It is possible to ride comfortably to places far away, but locally the passenger train is almost as obvious a passing institution as the old family buggy or the old family nag herself.

For years after I moved into my house, away back in 1918, I used to sit by the window and glance up from my desk at the traffic going by. There was a lot of it in twenty-four hours, of course, but there was enough space between any two units of it for me to pound the typewriter a few times or read a page or two between looks at the so-called busy thoroughfare in front of my house. In those days the stock being taken to the market or being driven to some farm came by on foot and sometimes rested or mooed or rooted in my own yard, the drivers seeming not to care especially what happened to their charges. Imagine today a flock of sheep or a drove of pigs serenely braving US31W; most of the group would be ready for sale as fresh meat much sooner than was anticipated. The modern animal for sale or one bound to fresh pastures rides in state past my house; the safety of the whole business is similar to the saving of precious time.

I have been wondering whether I may not live long enough to walk down the middle of the road, not molested by speeding cars or lowing herds. Overhead meanwhile would be flying boxcars or flying trains or what have you, taking people and things to where they need to be; I would be watching the birds or maybe, as I have done, reading as I walked, oblivious to the rush of a mighty age. Of course, a boxcar might fall on me some time, but meanwhile I would be walking along trails that used to be safe and free.

UNDER ONE ROOF

It is good to read a faithful account of life as it was lived half a century ago in southern Kentucky, an area that most writers have overlooked as the setting for anything interesting or memorable. Emma Wilson, in UNDER ONE ROOF, has given a plain but sympathetic picture of some five years in the life of her family when they lived at the Leavell Place, just outside Hopkinsville. Here are not super-people or spectacular human beings but good middle-class citizens, hard-working, ambitious, devoted to a few simple articles of faith in life itself, just like the leaders of Fidelity at the same time, a few miles farther west, or just like hundreds of wholesome communities and households in the central area of the United States. Daddy is a tobacco man, Mother teaches elocution in the neighboring college, Grandpa is a country doctor, Grandma is a lady of the old school who knows good manners when she sees them. There are three children: Brother(Thomas), Sister(Lucy), and the youngest, the author, who was only four years old when the family moved to the farm and just nine when they left. In the background are others: Aunt Callie, the cook and maid-of-all-work, skillful as a cook, a philosopher, and as a conjurer; Uncle John, who runs the farm; the neighboring Knights, Woods, Walkers, and Smolletts; Grover, the faithful dog; and Belle and Charlie, the horses. In a way, Grover is almost the central character, for he is the favorite of Emma and her family and becomes such a part of the household that his death marks the end of a whole era.

Fortunately, Miss Wilson keeps throughout the book the point of view of herself as a little girl, the same little girl who had lived through the many events that took place while the family dwelt under one roof at the Leavell Place. This is not always easy for a writer, for most of us cannot help thinking backwards sometimes, with our wealth of years and experiences. Emma is a trusting child, always slightly ashamed of being the youngest

and, therefore, somewhat inferior to Brother and Sister. As a youngest member of a good-sized family, I, too, can recall how inconsequential I felt when everybody else but me remembered something that took place a long time ago. It was a psychological triumph for Mother in this book when she helped Emma understand that Santa Claus is just as real as can be, even though he does not come down chimneys. Even Brother and Sister, big and feeling grown-up, cannot resist the spirit of Christmas in their attitudes toward less fortunate children.

Most of the numerous children in the book are of the same social rank as are the Wilsons; the only differences are the natural ones of differing personalities. Probably the average level is presented best when the children are thrown with children of a different social level: when the bored, rich little girl comes from New York to live a while in Hopkinsville and seems so puzzling to the natural, unrestrained Wilsons and Walkers or when the well-to-do Wilsons can be genuinely neighborly to the Smolletts, whose father seems unable to make ends meet.

The only really dark side of the picture is the Night Rider outbreak in 1907, when Hopkinsville and many other places in the Dark Tobacco Belt suffer from terrorism. The Wilsons felt this tragedy more keenly because Daddy was a buyer for the "trusts" and was, therefore, regarded as a natural enemy by the "Association" members.

Grandma and Grandpa, fine old people of another time, help to instill into the three children the importance of being Somebody, somebody to be trusted, to be welcome anywhere. Aunt Celie, too, is proud of her "white folks" and loses no opportunity to keep up the good name of the family.

Probably the book makes its greatest appeal to me and many other middle-aged people like me in that is is true to the life that the Fidelity Wilsons led, a life not rich in earthly belongings but rich in faith, in love, in forward-looking. If the Hopkinsville Wilsons were not actually related to us at Fidelity, they ought to have been; our lives certainly ran parallel to theirs; our plain faith in life matched theirs. Read the book and take a new grasp on what good, plain people are like.

"MUTE, INGLORIOUS MILTON"

Thomas Gray, in discussing the great people of Stoke Poges who never had a chance to be great in the big world, mentions that in this neglected spot may rest "some mute, inglorious Milton." Sentimentalists the world over have loved that poem, for they like to believe themselves great world figures who never had a chance. On the other hand, the rest of us sometimes have felt the superior greatness of the local great ones and have wondered why they ever got the notion that they were great.

One of the passing institutions of our time is the local dictator or local demi-god. Automobiles, better education, travel, and all the gadgets of civilization have done much to dethrone local heroes generally. It is very easy to drive a few miles away and be completely outside the range of their influence. There was a time when some one man or some one family seemed to own the county and the county seat. If actual ownership was out of the question, influence was not. In one small Kentucky county seat town nearly every phase of civilized life is dominated by the members and in-laws of a single family. They own the stores, the bank, the undertaking establishment; one is a dentist, another a lawyer, another a doctor. If you transact any earthly business or decide to take off for other worlds, you almost have to do business with this family or go miles away to another town, almost as completely dominated. For years I have wanted to name the numerous counties I have known well and place alongside the dominant family or families. I may have waited too long; besides, I probably would endanger my own standing with the ruling familes if I did such a thing. It might look as if I were questioning the divine right of the royal familes to rule Podunk and its adjoining county. With me, however, it is through no personal objection to this long-handed-down dominance; it is merely picturesque, especially since I have not had to live very much under such family dominance.

A comic aspect of this old folk tradition is that often younger members of a prominent family cannot understand why outsiders feel no especial reverence for mere names of great men who used to be. "Love me, love my dog" loses most of its force for people who have wandered into a county seat town from some other state and have no natural or artificial reverence for local gods. Some of the older dominant families persist in producing genuine leaders that are worthy of local and general reverence. Some, though, seem to have spent their last great effort in producing an ancestor who now lies in the family graveyard under an elaborate tombstone. An elderly local citizen and I were discussing that very thing lately and wondered at the loss of power in certain names that, a half century or more, were worth thousands of dollars at a bank or even more, though in an intangible way, in social circles. Some ancestors' greatness has worn pretty thin.

All of us love to ring changes on the achievements of somebody who was remotely akin to us and who did something great or near-great. That is as it should be, so long as we remember that our listeners are equally blest with great forebears. The thing that probably irritates me most is to be expected to salaam at the sound of a great name, even of somebody whom I had never heard of before but who has been presented with a flourish by an admiring descendant. Since we know so little about our ancestors anyway, it is easy to enlarge them after they are gone and attribute to them the abstract virtues that cluster around all heroes' names. Maybe the bare facts about them would be somewhat disillusioning; it is very comforting to know that the people whom we bore with our great ones cannot refute the high-sounding things we say, since they know as little as we about their own. With the tremendous coming and going of people from everywhere, local myths and pose-taking stances when great ones are mentioned wear pretty thin. These may offer great comfort to the descendants of the former prominent ones, but they are pretty dreary to the rest of us, especially when we would like to parade some of our own dead-but-not-forgotten great ones.

WHAT IS YOUR COUNTY?

Recently, in looking over a list of Kentucky counties, it suddenly occurred to me that many of our county names are pronounced in varying ways, some of them locally, some over wider areas. There is no International Phonetic Alphabet that newspapers use; hence I will have to respell the words to approximate the sounds. The champion, I think is McCreary, which I have often heard called McQuiry or something like that. An older pronunciation, still found among some elderly people when I first visited there, called Barren County to rhyme with Warren, that is, with a broad a. Those same older people called Marrowbone with a broad a, as if it were spelled with an o. For that matter, our ancestors, when they came to America, had dozens of such sounds: sparrow, harrow, arrow, and many more words had the same ah-sound. One of my little cousins used to give "Who Killed Cock Robin?" as a reading when she was tiny; her sparrow and arrow rhymed, it is true, but they sounded like rhyme words of sorrow and borrow.

County names that end in -on, like Fulton, Mason, Clinton, have a wide range of sounds for the last syllable. Some people distinctly sound a full syllable, almost as if each received the same full accent. Others slur the sound to a sort of -un; and many drop the vowel completely, leaving the last syllable really just n, with full vowel and consonant values. But that is not at all unusual in all sorts of words and does not represent any former history particularly or any dialectal variation that is especially important. Most people are probably unconscioud of this variation, since they have always been used to it.

Breckinridge Countians often make the first syllable of the name rhyme with tack. That, too, is a remnant, for hosts of our words have been pronounced in that way and are still so pronounced in England. Some of the American families with this name even spelled it with an a rather than an e. One such family produced Hugh Henry Brackenridge,

our earliest satirical novelist, author of MODERN CHIVALRY.

Two of our Bluegrass counties are called by varying names, based on the user's knowledge of French. These two are Bourbon and Fayette. In Bourbon, as used by some outsiders and a few insiders, there is an effort to pronounce the first syllable as oo, in French fashion. In Fayette the variation is in the accent, first syllable in English fashion, second syllable in French fashion. I have never been able to be sure when the user is merely an outsider or is parading his knowledge of French.

Metcalfe varies from a very shortened cuf as the last syllable to a prolonged calf as many of us call a certain barhyard animal. In the latter pronunciation the second syllable receives as much accent as the first. Several other names share this lengthened second syllable: Greenup, Monroe, and sometimes Adair.

Though I have never heard anyone call Bath as if it were British, that is, with a broad or even deep a, as in father or awful, I still am wondering why such a pronunciation does not bob up, to show that whoever uses it has been abroad and about. The Frenchified pronunciation of Versailles, for example, sounds pretty funny to most Kentuckians, especially those who have never studied French or been in France.

County itself has a pronunciation that we share with thousands of people in our mid region of the United States. It has been written Keounty by some; lots of Kentuckians, Indianians, and Illinoisians say this unconsciously. I have often visited Brown Keounty State Park in Indiana. "What Keounty or County did you say you are from?"

TAKING A VACATION

Nothing seems any more fixed in our customs now as a nation than the annual vacation, with the family, wherever it can be arranged or financed. There is something very touching about the family groups at all vacation places, all desperately trying to have a good enough time to justify the expense of travel and motels and food and tickets to tourist traps along the way. However, it makes an observer proud to be an American to see that most of our travelers consist of a father, a mother, a boy or girl or two, and a dog. There is something very domestic about the tourist family. There is a fancied hope that everybody will get a rest, will sleep long hours, will come back to the regular tasks with more zeal. Actual rest sometimes has to wait until after the so-called vacation is over, but it is true that most of us acquire a new zeal for what we have to do in order to eat.

For the vast number of Americans this is a new custom. Until the coming of the automobile and its roads it was nearly impossible to travel very far on the typical American salary. Highly favored ones did manage to get to watering places for a week or so, lucky ones got a trip to the West by train, but ordinary ones had to be contented with visiting Grandma or other relatives. But ten or twelve miles then was a distance far more than five hundred miles now. Riding along in a slow-moving wagon or buggy for a whole day will reveal many wonders to the leisurely traveler. Once, long after I had been accustomed to riding in a car out to Fidelity from the railroad depot, I had the good fortune to go by wagon the familiar twelve miles. I renewed my old acquaintance with the somewhat varied landscape along the way and also had time to talk with one of my brothers, who had driven his team out to town that day with a load of something to sell and took me back with him. Though I have traveled over that stretch of road literally dozens of times, somehow I remember than one trip best. A whole series of thunderclouds came up on the horizon, but we managed to get

. . . to my old home before the storm broke. I couldn't help wishing it might hit us, just for the record.

A form of vacation trip was practiced by some of the men in our community. They would go to Tennessee River for an all-night fishing trip and live with the mosquitoes for a while. The men would come back with wild stories of their success as fishermen, sometimes with some fish to prove their yarns. But they would look pretty mosquito-bitten for days, for no one then ever had had a tent or other camping equipment.

When I went away from Fidelity to teach school, forty-eight years ago, I boarded with a farm family not too far from the Mississippi River and its small tributaries in the western end of the Jackson Purchase. That family had a tradition of going to Whayne's Corner to fish and spend the night. The spot, in spite of its having a name, was out in the big bottoms, no more distinguished by its looks than any other corner. As would be expected, there was no camping equipment; the landlord and his wife and two small children slept in the wagon; the boys and I tried to sleep under the wagon. The mosquitoes were so bad that we actually crawled under heavy quilts, though it was a hot, steamy night. My landlady was a good cook, however, and we also had the luxury of a big zinc washtub full of ice and cold drinks. We could fight mosquitoes with one hand and stuff food into our mouths with the other, and that is what we did. Even the whelks that the mosquitoes raised were symbols of our having been camping and fishing; others who did not have similar bumps were almost as envious as we now are of those who rove afar like Ulysses and come back with colored pictures, unlike Ulysses, to show the envious ones, who, like the second little pig, "stayed at home."

To the north of us the camping or cottaging habit grew up much earlier than here and to the south. In my earliest rovings in summer vacations with my wife and children, it was easy to find cottages to live in when we went to Michigan or Maine, but even motels were slow about developing in Alabama and Mississippi, where we sometimes stayed on our way to relatives on the Gulf Coast. Summer vacations have changed as much as any human institution that I have studied in my long years of sitting on the sidelines.

"OLD MAN" So-and-So

When we were very much younger, people who were merely in their twenties and thirties seemed as old as Adam. I used to wonder how so many of the elderly people at Fidelity could have endured hardships through such long lives. Looking back now, with a different kind of perspective, I find myself lamenting the early death of a great many people whom I knew. And the astonishing thing is that some of the elderly ones of my childhood are still living, a bit old, I will admit.

When I was a child, "Old-man" Dunn lived for a while on my father's farm. I felt that he was a very old man to work so hard in the fields. He seemed almost as hard as iron and could just about work down many of the younger men. Over and over I wondered at this strange phenomenon. I just knew that the useful days of the old man were about over. Forty-three years after I had left Fidelity, I spoke at the high school there. "Old-man" Dunn was right there and had driven from Paducah, nearly fifty miles away, to hear me. There was hardly a gray hair in his head, he walked with the spring of a much younger man, and his voice was in no way broken or old-mannish. I know now that he had been merely in the thirties when the other boys and I called him an old man. But the champion of them all was, and is, my nearest neighbor when I lived out east of Fidelity. He is still going strong at ninety-four, a genuinely old man now, but he seemed a second Methuselah when I was a teen-age boy. Isn't it strange how a few years on the debit side of the ledger will change people's opinions?

But this attitude toward age is not entirely a matter of my getting nearly a half century near old age than I was when I left Fidelity. People are actually getting older. Statistics hold before us a life expectancy of some sixty-eight years for men, seventy-two for women. And in 1888, when I was born, the hopeful figures were only half those of today. I have said before in this column that when my great-uncle and his wife celebrated their golden wedding, along about 1904, nearly everybody

wondered at the great age of the two. Why, Uncle Jim was seventy-four; Aunt Jane was seventy-one! I cannot recall having heard of any other such celebration in my whole experience at Fidelity. In my home-town paper today there is rarely a week that goes by without pictures showing couples who are celebrating their golden wedding; once in a great while there are pictures of people who have been married sixty or more years.

And that brings up the rather touchy subject of retirement. That is an ugly word to many people whom I know and has a rather ugly sound to me. Formerly it was not so necessary to call a halt to anyone's working at his job; usually the man wore out long before he had attained to great age. It was rather unusual when one of my uncles, Mother's brother, decided at sixty-five to retire. Most men just weren't that old. He felt that a few years of rounding out his memories would end it all. And then he took a new lease on life, lived to be ninety, and then died from no especial disease: he had become too excited when his numerous descendants came to a surprise birthday party for him and died a day or two later from a slight stroke. In those twenty-five years after he had quit to die, he nearly wore himself and others threadbare because he had too much energy to be useless. He cultivated a garden, but gardens do not need attention every day in the week. He walked down town, ten or twelve blocks, nearly every day, for a chat with the other old boys who congregated in front of the courthouse. He and they fought the Civil War over and over, but, since there was nobody from the other side to dispute the figures and the successes, the South won, hands down, until it began to be monotonous. Just a week before the old man's ninetieth birthday he rode out to see my sister, some fifteen miles from his old home. He did not do the driving, because he had never learned how to manage a car, but he said that something was getting wrong with him, for he couldn't walk down town and back--considerably more than a mile--without "sorter gettin' out of breath." He had lived through an age of relatively young people and had become a genuine antique. Thus time changes even age itself.

In the earlier days of folklore study, the collectors felt that we in America were lacking in folktales. Practically all the early efforts were spent in collecting ballads, and that field of folklore is still the one best studied in America. Some students lamented because we did not have such stories as the famous ones that the Grimm Brothers of Germany collected and published. Only in fairly recent years have folklore scholars decided that our corny yarns, among other folktales, are very distinctive and worthy of collection. One such scholar is Vance Randolph, the grand old man of folk study in the Ozarks. In our own state Dr. Herbert Halpert of Murray State College and Dr. Leonard Roberts of Union College have helped awaken us to the importance of this type of folktale.

As you might suppose, I was practically raised on corny yarns. And all my life I have loved them, somewhat shamedfacedly, for I used to feel that liking such common things was a sign of poor taste or even a depraved one. Years ago, in my last graduate work, I was assigned a task that probably made the older scholars turn over rather violently in their graves. Dr. Stith Thompson, the great folktale scholar, asked me to read in Latin, French, and German a whole group of yarns, give a brief summary of each of them, and indicate which ones were a bit too risqué to be studied. In that way I got acquainted with hosts of great illustrative stories, of the "That reminds me" type. Ever since then I have tried to keep my eyes open to the merits of such tales and have lost the shame I used to feel when I remembered that I liked such corny things.

These corny yarns have a whole array of folk elements, quite as many as the ballads or the better-known fairy tales of Europe. They are given a relocation by every teller of them, so that they seem to be genuine wherever they are found. It takes only a little readaptation to make them fit anywhere. "A feller over on Cutshin Branch had the purtiest wife you ever seen, but she used to flirt with drummers." And then we are off to a good start, with incidents as old as the human race but so localized

that you are ashamed to doubt the incident as genuine history.

Dumb husbands of flirtatious wives, smart-aleck children who tell more than they should, coarse practical jokes, horse laughter, gags played on visitors from the outside world, the village idiot and his unexpected wisdom at times, cheaters who get cheated, local misers or Lady Bountifuls--a generous mixture of a few of these, even, with ordinary talk, and a good yarn results. I knew hundreds of them, on several levels of decency. The unexpurgated ones appeared at log rollings and wheat threshings. Little boys were supposed to be elsewhere, but some of them managed to be near enough to get the coarse joke or coarser trick practiced on some newcomer. Then there were children's versions of many of these yarns, slightly dry-cleaned or toned-down. Even the women had their versions, sometimes rather far away from the loud-mouthed horse-laughter versions of the log rollings. A good place to hear some of them was in the political campaigns. Some of the candidates did not have a great deal to say about their platforms and had to use up some time and entertain the voters. Candidates usually went pretty far in their yarns but still tried to keep from offending the ladies and children present. Around the fire when people came to sit till bedtime would appear numerous such stories, some of the small children often telling the yarns a bit too baldly or missing the point completely. But my favorite type of story-teller or yarn-spinner is a "bearded feller about sixty year old, soaked in hillside tobacco, and needing a bath pretty badly." He never "heered" of grammar and is, therefore, not hampered by any rules of language. His voice fits the part, too, going up or down at the right places. He likes his story so well that he laughs at the right places, looks solemn when he ought to, and always gets the punch line at the right psychological moment. Now that we have so many recording devices, his voice will be saved for future scholars and other people alike. Too often a written corny yarn loses nearly all of its flavor because the voice of the teller is not heard. I know of no artistry that is any greater than that of some of the yarn-spinners whom I have heard.

"IT RUNS IN FAMILIES"

In the early days of the study of folk songs, it was assumed by scholars that in primitive times everybody made up songs; everybody was a poet, if you please. "The singing, dancing throng" of these earlier scholars seemed to satisfy all one's questions about primitive people. Later scholars repeated this conclusion ad nauseam. It did not seem to dawn upon some of these intellectuals that they might observe primitive people of today and see how true their theories were. It would not have taken an observer more than a day at Fidelity to discover that singing, especially solo singing, ran in families. Once in a great while the whole community might join in on some favorite song, but that was just about like some modern singer of note requesting the audience to join him on the chorus of "My Old Kentucky Home." Modern scholars look upon ballad-making and folk singing as distinctly an accomplishment of occasional persons or of families but not of people as a whole.

Certainly folk singing and other folk accomplishments were not universal in our part of the world. An occasional workman could do very artistic designing of furniture; some of our women, in certain families, could make artistic designs for quilts or embroidery; however, most of us were as awkward with our hands as the proverbial man with ten thumbs. My own artistry as a carpenter went no further than constructing horse troughs with fairly straight lines or chicken coops that would stand erect or nearly so. But some of the boys I knew could work wonders, even though they could not spell and did not know whether Europe was a country or some sort of patent medicine.

Now, Aunt Jane and her daughter Mary were genuine folk singers. Whether it was a family characteristic beyond the time of Aunt Jane, I do not know, but I strongly suspect it was. Nobody else in my whole experience has ever had a more folkish voice than did Aunt Jane, and her daughter's voice was not too far behind her mother's. By the side of

these two voices the others of us merely croaked or wailed.

Mimicry also ran in certain of our families. One certain family did this so well that the rest of us seemed poor imitators. If one of our neighbor families had lived in the time of television or even extensive vaudeville, they could have been another Foy family, now so famous in pictures.

Yarn spinning is by no means a habit equally great among all sorts of folk. Many yarn-spinners are dull to tears but live long lives without ever finding it out. It seemed a shame in my boyhood to tell a professional but dull yarn spinner that he was barking up the wrong tree. Many times we laughed at his story because it was so pointless or so irritating that we had to get some sort of relief, and swearing was forbidden in our homes. But the yarn spinner par excellence rarely is aware of his skill. He seems born with a taste for details and for expressive language. Whether his story is for men only or for other groups, he seems to know just where to hasten along on his way, where to slow down, where to pause for laughter or wonderment. The average yarn spinner, especially the dull one, seems to expect the words alone to be funny; that is rarely true. That is one reason why written-down humor is often flat. The best humor in the world is a sort of combination of words, voice, occasion, and previous experience of yarn spinner and listener. I have often tried to teach Mark Twain's "Jumping Frog," but I despair of getting it across except to those who have known a dead-pan spinner of yarns that are at best rather pointless. Too many people expect a yarn to be riproaring funny; some are; but many of the best produce a chuckle that occurs again and again, sometimes for a lifetime. We laugh at the stage Englishman who takes a long time to catch the point of the punch line; he may be merely tasting and enjoying what the rest of us want to enjoy all at once. Anyway, a good folk teller of tales often injects into his yarn something that lasts long after the loud laughter has vanished. And, many times, this yarn spinner is the lineal descendant of some other feller who rolled them in the aisles back in other generations.

"LET-ME TELL ONE"

The biggest difference between a folk tale properly told and one that has fallen into the hands of a gag writer for some famous humorist is the difference between reality and fake. I repeat what I said ~~some~~ a week ago: The thing that makes something funny is more than likely to be the teller himself, the time, the backgrounds, rather than the actual words. Many an antique folktale has been redressed within recent years to help round out the funny man's program on radio or television. Once in a great while the yarn or gag sounds pretty funny, but, so far as I am concerned, the voice of the teller or his built-up reputation as a droll yarn spinner makes the gag appear almost normal in its appeal. Often, however, the old folk joke that wowed people of another generation falls pretty flat; in adapting the old gag to modern times and conditions, the funny man or his writers failed to bring the atmosphere of other times, when the joke was funny in the extreme.

The best yarn-spinning I have ever heard was the kind where no money or reputation was to be considered. If I were asked to pick out the one time when I enjoyed folk gags best of the thousands of times when I have been a part of a yarn-spinning group, I would choose a late-fall night some ~~fifteen~~ twenty-five years ago, when I was camping in the cliff country of northern Todd County. My companion and I had already gone to bed in our tent when company came--the son of the man on whose farm we were camping and the tenant. Long ago I learned that you must not ask a good story-teller to perform; that is too much like making an elephant put on an act. If you want good yarns, try to best your guest in spinning them. Start out with some of your mild ones and leadd up to better ones. My companion and I did this very thing and got results. The tenant had a perfect voice for the part he played--drawling and up-and-down. At first my yarns were as good basically as his, but I did not have the voice or the quid of tobacco. We warmed up by the "far" of pine knots and launched farther and farther

he came into Fidelity, maybe proving thereby that the earth is round, or that the sun is the center, or something.

But there was another side to drummers that I heard little about at Fidelity. Maybe our drummers were circumspect, or maybe I was too young and dumb to understand. I refer, of course, to the heart-smashing tendencies of the drummer as he appears in back-country areas generally. In other places I have found enough wild yarns about drummers to fill a good-sized book, all of them about the way the country girls fell for the wild fellows and how fickle all the drummers were. To have run away with a drummer was regarded as the lowest sort of calamity to befall any girl. But the same winning manners seems to have persisted, for even the youngest of my students tell the same sorts of yarns about the weak little girls who could not resist the drummer's oily smile and charming manners.

Now what is a traveling salesman? He goes around to places to sell his firm's stuff, just like the drummer, but he is likely to be driving his own car and counting the miles or the hours until he can get back to his home or his headquarters. Sometimes he tramps the streets between customers and looks about as foot-weary as most peripatetics. He has manners, yes, but rarely the oily smile that the drummer inherited or else acquired. I hear no modern risqué yarns about the salesman except those that were old and have to substitute traveling salesman for drummer, long after the genuine flavor of such yarns has passed. And so, with the coming of automobiles and quicker transportation, the picturesque drummer has passed off the scene; within a few decades any story told about him will have to be footnoted as much as American stories containing slang have to be explained learnedly to the British people who read them. "Did you ever hear about the drummer that..?"

There has always been a trick of calling objects by plain or fancy names, according to the company present or the social standing of the speaker. Hence there are hosts of synonyms in our language, so many that it requires a good-sized lifetime to master them and their subtle differences. There are crude words, ordinary words, dress-up words, religious words, political words, man words, woman words, child words. Not to know which one to use often makes a fellow regarded as green or coarse or pious or hypocritical. Suppose we take the two words or expressions "drummer" and "traveling salesman" as illustrations.

If the dictionary knew its stuff, these two would be listed as synonyms, and within very wide bounds they are. But in the strictest sense they are not. The drummer was a man who was half real, half the creation of the folk. In the days when most people had never been far away, the drummer, nattily dressed and riding in a "double rig," seemed like somebody from away off, a sort of metropolitan figure that breezed into remote neighborhoods at intervals and brought samples of what the big world was eating or wearing. Most of the time the drummer was DRIVEN by a colored or white man whom the livery stable had employed for just such important duties. The driver took care of the "rig" and the horses; the drummer had nothing to do but take care of his big trunks of samples and his immaculate clothes. Prince Charming probably never looked quite so appealing as did this dude from the Big World. It was a great event to be in the country store when the drummer arrived; the yarn-spinners at the stove or on the front porch talked in subdued tones to hear what the store keeper and the drummer were saying. I used to feel doubly honored by being sent to trade in a basket of eggs at the store if I could see a drummer. We had one that was well over six feet tall and was red-headed. His comings and goings were as regular as those of Halley's Comet. Every spring and fall

into yarns that only folklorists or genuine folk can appreciate. Late at night the feller took his lantern and walked back to his shack and out of my life, but the yarns he spun then have lingered on. Many of them were old ones that I had heard all my life, but an occasional one, properly localized--"up here at Clifty," "over on Rabbit Ridge," "down here around Sharon Grove"--had a brand-new ring that still remains, after all these years, fresh as on that November night along about 1930.

Those yarns and thousands more that I have heard or read would sound very flat if told by any one outside the charmed circle. I feel like kicking myself for not writing down, as soon as the feller had gone back to his shack, all the expressions that gave the yarn its flavor. Of course, no form of writing can catch the tone, probably the best part of all. In dozens of books I have read summaries of folk yarns and felt pretty cold. Suppose I summarize a few and see how much they ~~make~~ entertain you. ~~laugh.~~ But please try to put flesh and blood and bones into these sketches; remember how you heard them told.

1. A girl at the mourner's bench in a dimly-lighted brush arbor opens her eyes briefly and sees the shining head of the preacher, who has come to offer help in her getting religion. Thinking the shining object is her knee, she "kivers it with her skyeart."

2. A crazy woman takes refuge in an old church during a storm. A traveler seeks the same shelter and is scared nearly out of his wits when something grabs him by his coat. He shucks his coat, jumps on his horse bareback, and rides away furiously.

3. A lone horseman, riding alone at night through the woods where crossties were being made, SUDDENLY FEELS SOMETHING OR SOMEBODY JUMP UP ON THE SADDLE BEHIND HIM. ~~SUDDENLY~~ Soon coming to an opening in the woods, he dimly sees that a crosstie "juggle" or big chip is the strange object stealing a ride.

4. A country doctor, returning late at night from a distant call, sees in the graveyard a woman, dressed in her nightgown, wandering around among the tombstones. He recognizes her as a sleepwalker and takes her to her home.

T+C

Dr. Leonard Roberts, of Union College, Barbourville, in collecting folktales in the mountains of Kentucky ran into a strange mixture of ancient and modern things, the strangest of all being that it was never inconvenient to find electrical connections to plug in for his tape recorder. Now, isn't that a strange combination of ancient and modern? The stories that he recorded are inheritances from the very earliest pioneers and were already centuries old when America itself was recorded. Through many generations these folktales have remained in oral tradition, a very distinctive part of mountain culture. Folkways have changed in some spheres beyond recognition, but the traditional tales have "lingered on."

Just this week I was talking to a very intelligent, youngish man, who has a better-than-average education for his county and his time. In the midst of his talk, usually pretty good in grammar, he used the word deaf, pronounced as if it had been spelled d-e-e-f. It must have been several generations since that was the accepted pronunciation among people of education. However, a slightly older man spoke not too long ago, in the very section where I was visiting, about a cowcumber tree, our beautiful native magnolia. Dr. Samuel Johnson, whose monumental dictionary appeared just 200 years ago this year, called it that. Undoubtedly the pioneers who settled in south-central Kentucky knew only that pronunciation for a long time. One of my students told me some years ago that he was almost through college before he ever thought that there was anything queer about saying cowcumber tree.

As I write this esssay, the members of a strange cult are getting ready to hold a church service and exhibit the poisonous snake that bit and killed one of their leaders just this week. I wish I could be on hand at this service, for I would like to see how modern the people are in many ways, even though they seem so medieval in others. All of them will come in cars, of course, many of them in much better cars than a member of

my profession, school-teaching, can afford. They will be, on the whole, as well dressed as any similar-sized group of religious people, of your church or mine.

41 Also in this very week I heard a prosperous, intelligent man who was raised on the farm declare that planting corn according to the phases of the moon produced certain variations in the height of the stalk. I am afraid that some of our high-priced hybrids will have to take down their sign. Some of these days a farmer will plant these low-growing hybrids in the light of the moon, and he will have to get extension ladders to reach the ears.

Because of several cases of illness in my family this year, I have had ~~considerable~~ considerable contact with hospitals and nursing homes. I have rejoiced because of modern effective ways of dealing with illness; I have had a great build-up in my always strong regard for the medical profession. But I will be willing to bet a good-sized sum that withing rifleshot of the hospital or nursing home there are numbers of people who have taken quack stuff within the last few months that was fully as potent as branch water. Maybe some one, like me afflicted with goiter, have rubbed some harmless colored water on the afflicted parts this very day, some branch water with something added to give it color and smell--the two essentials for any folk medicine. An acquaintance of mine used to lave his gotter daily with some such goo, at a dollar a bottle, even though his basic intelligence seemed far above par and his family was and is a very solid and respected one. It is possible, of course, that I need some of that patented branch water to relieve the swelling in my neck. Maybe it is foolish to try to be modern. Why not lay in a supply of asafoetida for this winter? And a good plaster, made of cantharides, can certainly take your mind off the pain in your back, especially when the plaster is applied to the tummy. I believe I'l stop and go find a buckeye to tote around to ward off rheumatiz; if I can locate a blacksmith shop, I can get a horseshoe nail to make into a ring for the little finger, to keep off rheumatiz or heart trouble or liver complaint. It wouldn't cost so much as shots of this or that.

We used to sit around the open fireplace and tell tales. Everybody knew many tales, but some of them were distinctly flavored by the teller and were known as Uncle Bob's yarns or some such title. After we had told and retold the yarns that everybody knew to begin with, we would beg for the ones that each member of our group knew best or could tell best. Often we did not know that the tale was traditional; the teller had so localized the tale that it seemed like genuine history. Actual stories in which supernatural beings or haints appeared were very few. Most of them had a distinctly comic ring or were deliberately told to make the flesh crawl. Some of them ended with the teller jumping at one or another of the listeners. We knew this would be, but we jumped and screamed for the fortieth time quite as much as we had when we had heard the scary yarn for the first time. Our version of Little Red Ridinghood always ended with "What's them great big teeth for?" "To eat up up with," and the teller grabbed at one of the already-scared youngsters and gave him a thrill and a reward for being so noticed.

Our tales fell into several categories. Hunting yarns, panthers, great achievements with the gun or the fishing pole entertained us and sounded as reasonable as the stories Mother and Father and all the older people told about the enormous numbers of Passenger Pigeons that used to be. I was a mature man before I was able to verify these accounts about this now-vanished bird, but I have not yet been able to verify many of the other animal and bird yarns that we heard. I sometimes wonder just how numerous the wild turkeys were in early days. I cannot help feeling that one remarkable experience became the norm when people called up their memories. Snows and wild fowl grew about equally in the telling. Tennessee River certainly had had some very large fish, according to the yarns we heard. And squirrels used to be so numerous that raising a crop of corn must have been a miracle. And quail, too, used to just dare the hunter to shoot them. Of course, some of this was nearly true, but the

yarn-spinner was never known to minimize such things, especially when they concerned himself.

My neighborhood, maybe because my father was a doctor, had hosts of yarns about mysterious deaths or accidents. There were enough in actuality, but a group of tale-tellers around the fireplace could soon call up enough yarns to make your flesh crawl. The still-unsolved mystery of Pat Shehan and his death was told until I knew all the details. He was aN Irish ditch-digger who drifted into our neighborhood, gambled and drank heavily, and was found dead and floating in Tennessee River. He was reputed to have had a lot of money, probably more from gambling than from ditch-digging. ~~Whatever happened to it~~ what happened to him and his money is still unknown, at least legally. A good many actual murders took place just before and just after my birth, but none of them were as bold and as nerve-~~tingling~~ tingling in reality as in the growing yarns that grew up.

Everybody had a soldier relative, always a Southerner. Not often did we get military yarns, for the tellers of tales preferred to tell about the human side of war. I heard far more yarns about raids on gardens or henroosts than on Yankees. How to outwit the owner of something good to eat seemed to be the essence of being a good soldier. It was a sad day in my life when I found out that fully half of these true stories ~~were~~ have been the common stock of soldiers since wars began. I have no doubt that many of the so-called authentic yarns that I heard were much better told in the days of chivalry itself, and were equally true then as just before my time.

The sense of history was present among us, but it was hard to separate any event that happened before our time and any other one, however old. When an elderly ex-slave pretended that she had been George Washington's nurse, that sounded as sensible as for one still living to have nursed Uncle Jerry or Uncle Joe, two of our oldest ex-slave-owners. I liked best of all Uncle John Elkin's stories about the Jackson Purchase in its early settlement days. He had even hunted as a small boy in the area before the Indians had sold it to the United States. And my own immediate ancestors had come in with the first wave of settlement, so that history was not merely something in a book. I do not yet know how much of what I was taught was actual history, how much was age-old tradition.

TC

MY OWN DESERTED VILLAGE

Many times in this column I have spoken of changes that have made former prosperous villages all but disappear. Today I want to pay my respects to an actual village, by name. On February 15, 1955, the post-office at Moscow, Kentucky, was closed. That marked the end of a whole era in the Jackson Purchase. Stamp enthusiasts all over America kept the postmistress at the small village very busy the last few days of the existence of the postoffice, for they wanted genuine postmarks of a postoffice that was closing. Though there are a few houses left in what used to be a good-sized village, the town itself really died several years ago, after a number of disasters.

When I first knew the village, in 1908, when I became the principal of the two-room school there, it was genuinely prosperous. It had a flour mill that was known all over that end of the state. There were two very large stores--almost department stores--, a bank, a Masonic lodge second in importance only to Paducah of the lodges in the Purchase, two churches, a railroad depot, several smaller stores, an undertaking establishment, and just about everything else that a village could need. Around the village lies some of the best farm land in the world; some of the well-to-do farmers had their homes in the village itself, to be near the busy life of the time. In the fall hundreds of dressed turkeys were shipped from the local railroad station; some of the small boys of my school could make more money dressing turkeys than I was making as their teacher.

A number of things happened to cause the death of the village. Some of the area occupied by it were subject to overflow from backwaters from the Mississippi when it got especially high, as in 1913 and 1927. Several disastrous fires almost ruined the central part of the village. The rise of the great manufacturing centers around the Great Lakes drew away many workmen. But the one thing that gave the final stab was the auto-

mobile. The old road to Clinton ran through Bayou du Chien bottom and was muddy in winter and dusty in summer. It would have cost a great sum of money to build a fill above high-water levels when the Mississippi really shows its force. Therefore, the state highway department built the road on the other side of the stream, completely missing the village. Only a dead-end road connects with Ky 127. The last time I drove into the village, I almost mired up in front of my former boarding place, even though it was late August, not mid-winter. The houses that I had known had so disappeared that I could hardly find my way around. Only weeds and bushes and a few burned timbers marked the site of some of the large stores I had known. I came away feeling that I had attended my own funeral.

The passing of Moscow as a thriving village is more than a news item in a Paducah paper. It epitomizes the whole era in which some of us have lived. New lines of travel, newer forms of transportation, new interests, the wiping out of former barriers--how many things we could think of that the passing of the village suggests. There had been a self-sufficiency in that village and many more like it. Just about everything that mankind needed was there: home, school, stores, churches, ~~adequate~~ small factories to supplement what could be made at home. The railroad brought in the few other things that were a part of civilization: mail, manufactured articles, building materials, coal; it also took away surplus products: turkeys, corn, flour, wheat. There was a village feeling about the place, too, probably not so unified as a village in New England, but a something that identified every person with his village. It was a small world, of course, but for many a generation it worked, until modern ways wiped out village boundaries and made former bounds seem useless or even silly. In paying my respects to my former place of residence, away back in 1908-1910, I am not merely being personal: I am trying to place the passing of this village in the stern, unfeeling passage of human history.

SOUTH FROM HELL-FER-SARTIN

Dr. Leonard W. Roberts, head of the English department of Union College, Barbourville, has recently published a volume called SOUTH FROM HELL-FER-SARTIN, a book of 105 folktales that he collected in the Kentucky mountains, chiefly in Leslie and Perry Counties. The title is taken from Hell-for-Certain Creek, in Leslie County, which long ago gave its name to James Lane Allen's book of short stories about mountain people. Dr. Roberts is himself a mountaineer and proud of the fact; he grew up in Floyd County, attended Berea College, taught there, and has done graduate work in Iowa and Kentucky, getting his Ph. D. from the University of Kentucky. He began collecting tales while he was teaching in the Berea Foundation School and later extended his collecting into many remote hollows and mountain ridges. Most of his stories were taken down on a tape recorder and transcribed as nearly literally as a mere alphabet can reproduce some of the sounds in a good story. No effort is made to edit away the flavor of the story: if the narrator said that somebody built a far, that is what appears in the book. A few of the stories were written out for him by school children at Hyden and elsewhere in his area, always with a note appended that the story was learned from Grandma or some other old person. Dr. Roberts has carefully arranged the stories according to types as they are accepted among folklorists, following the original scheme worked out by a Finnish scholar, Antti Aarne, and revised and enlarged by Dr. Stith Thompson, a former Kentuckian, now emeritus professor of English at Indiana University. A vast amount of similar material is referred to in the notes, making the book very valuable to scholars.

But the stories themselves are the thing. Here are stories as they were and are told, not a literary dressing-up by someone who does not know or care anything about actual folk entertainment. Repetitions, bad grammar, misunderstood expressions, sometimes pointless remarks--all these come just

as they do in actual story-telling. Dr. Roberts has often found many variants, several of which he uses in this book. Among its other merits, the book shows conclusively that story-telling is by no means a lost art; it is as much alive in some places as it was a hundred years ago. It is significant that many of the tellers of the yarns are smallish children, who quite evidently are enjoying the yarn-spinning just as we did a whole generation ago.

The book is divided into four parts, according to the system of classifying folk tales: Animal Tales, Ordinary Tales, Jokes and Anecdotes, and Myths and Local Legends. Nearly all of these stories were told in my own neighborhood, at the other end of creation. Some of them may have been adapted from printed versions of the Grimm folktales, but they have taken on so many localizations that they sound like brand-new yarns. The younger brother, many times named Jack, succeeds in these stories in spite of the condescension shown him by his two older brothers. It is Jack who solves the mystery or slays the giant or wins a princess and then rescuses his dumb but arrogant brothers. There are several versions of such old-time favorites as "The Golden Arm," which we used to tell to scare youngsters to death. Bluebeard, in a variety of cruel forms, cuts off all the heads except that of the smart young girl who outwits him. Among the jokes and anecdotes the Irishman--"Arshman"--appears often. Dr. Roberts think this use of the Irishman stems from the Scotch-Irish origin of such a large number of the mountain people. And Dr. Roberts also refutes that glib saying that the mountaineers are the largest present-day group of "pure Anglo-Saxon people" in the world by showing that some 35% of the early settlers came from Ireland and Scotland, 15% were Pennsylvania Germans, and a smaller number were French Huguenots. Hence, the folktales are to be traced to these three sources quite as much as to England itself. The whole book is an interesting one, to scholars and to ordinary readers, provided the ordinary reader understands that the collector is trying to preserve the idiom of the actual spinners of yarns as they exist today, and not the cautious, traindd speech of a literary person.

LOST VOCABULARIES

Several times in this column I have given a few words from vocabularies that have been lost because of changing standards of life. If one condition vanished, it took with it a whole lexicon of words, or else some of these words remained under the new conditions, often strangely inappropriate if their original meaning were known. It has long been a subject for discussion that the British people adapted stage-coach names to the railroad and its new life, whereas Americans applied steamboat words to the trains. Probably there is no sphere in which we differ more widely in our vocabulary from our British cousins than in words relating to travel. But that is hardly what I am thinking about just now.

Let's begin with the horse. Since horses are now largely for sports, such as riding, driving, and polo, the average person who does not know about these may come to a place where he will need an interpreter when someone talks about horses and horsy words. The words are still alive to us older ones, but what do these mean to teen-age boys and girls: mare, stallion, gelding, filly, family nag(even)? Then the activities in which horses participated as one of man's most useful domesticated animals: buggy, surrey, wagon, plow, harrow, and numerous dress-up words for fancy vehicles. I find my own vocabulary growing rusty when I think of the equipment of horses for their various tasks: saddle, bridle, harness, collar, trace-chain, belly-band, surcingle, crupper. I am afraid that I might have to study a bit before I could hitch up Old Mag to the buggy and go driving away to call on my best girl. Take the buggy and its accouterments: laprobe, buggy whip, dash board("of genuine leather," as in OKLAHOMA). And here are some more words that are not so much alive as they used to be: colt, breaking a young horse, matched team, hitchrein, H. M. T.(Hug-Me-Tight), the former nickname for a very narrow-bedded buggy. Old Dobbin is so nearly gone that we wonder how he ever could have been so much alive. Some of the words pertaining to horses and their use will

stay on in the language, of course, but how will future, or present, teachers explain "horse power"?

Now let's look at the lamp, once so valuable a part of every home. I cannot remember having seen grease lamps in action, but I did visit in one home where home-made tallow candles gave the flickering light for living room, dining room, and bedroom. Kerosene, or coal-oil, lamps were for a long time the acme of usefulness. There were plain ones, such as the very poor had on their tables; but by degrees the lamp evolved into a whole series of smart shapes and locations. The soft-toned shade on the table lamp in our parlor created the meaning for Milton's "casting a dim, religious lighte" when I first ran across that phrase in his poems. The hanging lamps, also with shades that gave color or dimness to the flame, became an institution, a sort of badge of being somebody; not to have one was to acknowledge that you were still not up in the world. And then there were reflector lamps, highly prized in homes and indispensable to illuminate the country church. Our church at Sulphur Springs had a big swinging lamp up front near the pulpit, another one back over the center of the church, and three or four reflector lamps on ~~the~~ each wall. With all of them going, we had more than Milton's "dim, religious light," especially since the inside of the church was painted a glaring white. What is a lantern, and why should it have been a great honor to a child to carry one when the family trekked across the fields to sit till bedtime? Why was a bull's-eye lantern so highly regarded? I see right now that, in my old age, I will have to spend a disproportionate ~~portion~~ part of my time explaining such things before we can enjoy the story being studied. "How far that little candle throws its beams; so shines a good deed in a naughty world."

Last week I listed a number of words that are now on the way out because they were associated with the horse and the coal-oil lamp. Suppose we look now at words connected with school that are getting hazy and will have to be honored with a footnote hereafter. I used to recite to my students Whittier's "In School-Days" without having to explain anything. They and I had had just about the same experiences that little Greenleaf Whittier had experienced in New England in the early 1800's. Now I have to footnote several expressions, such as calling the schoolhouse a "ragged beggar sleeping," "the charcoal frescoes on its wall," "the jack-knife's carved initial," "I'm sorry that I spelled the word."

I suppose that the most unknown object of my childhood today would be a slate, and yet it certainly held a great place then. It was unsanitary, of course, but we had never heard much about cleanliness except the regular washing of hands before meals, the washing of feet before turning in at night, and the weekly all-over bath on Saturday night. Slates had pencils, too, that could make more strange noises than any other instrument that I know of. One properly used could make many thousands of squeaks, but those same sounds were accompanied by much twisting of the tongue against the teeth, so much so that preparing a lesson on the slate practically wore out the tongue. The now-obsolete slate was a great place to try out one's artistry, making sketches of TEACHER or some other not-much-loved object. I must confess that I would like to have a collection of slate art; it would give inside glimpses into the lives of elderly people who probably have long forgotten their former attempts to be critical of humanity.

Seemingly, spelling has ceased to be a subject. It is supposed to be taught incidentally in other subjects. Theoretically, that is fine; in actuality, a great many students are going through our schools without the remotest idea of how to spell ordinary words. Maybe it would be a good idea to reintroduce spelling as it used to be or with a little more

sense attached to what words to spell when. Then it may be possible to understand headmarks, turning down, spelling matches, and such like. Maybe some prized award can be given, such as the vases that my sister won for having the most headmarks, three quarters of a century ago.

Our grammar, too, was pretty formal and senseless, but a few of us learned some of it and profited thereby, even to the point of correcting our crude parts of speech and our wrong cases. However, when we parsed, the rigmarole was more important than the reasons: "John is a noun, common noun, third person, singular number, nominative case, subject of ran." So far, so good; but we too often failed to see that grammar had any earthly connection with "I seen" and "he done" and "she run." We could name terms and parrot off definitions like little Chinese, but we rarely could have made up a definition that meant anything to us or to any one else. The funny memorizing of rules was the thing that makes the subject stand out most in my memory. There was a hard-and-fast rule for everything, often things that cannot be reduced to rules. If the teacher called for Rule VIII, we could rattle it off without the least bit of comprehension of what it meant.

Games had names then that they may or may not have today. It seems a half century since I heard of Wolf Over the River or Dare Base or Stealing Goods. Of course, I am not a child any more, but I should know a little about children as the father of two and the grandfather of three, not to mention my daily seeing several hundred as I go to my office. Of course, these town children would not stoop to play such crude games as we country children played a half century and more ago. Our equipment then just did not exist; what we had we had made, often very crudely. For the most part we just played, and might usually made right. As a weakling I was usually left out; hence I never learned to play much with any sense of pleasure. My playing was largely solitary. However, I always wished I could do stunts such as the big boys did on the acting pole or could dive into the swimming hole as these same boys could in summer when school was out. Our words and our very attitudes were different then; there is no sense in trying to reintroduce some of our ways; these are as good as they were a long time ago.

WHAT IS FUNNY?

Most of my life I have enjoyed watching my fellow human beings to see what amuses them most. In spite of education, travel, modern conveniences, humanity is still pretty foolish in its sense of humor. Customs change, but basic mirth-provokers remain.

Though we do not allow ourselves to laugh at disaster as our ancestors did, sometimes our veneer of culture peels off, and we are the primitive folk we used to be. No longer is it a custom to keep around for entertain ment purposes such unfortunates as dwarfs, idiots, deformed persons, and the insane. But it is a rare person whom I have known who did not get a smile, at least,because of the remarks or antics of some person who was hardly up to the standard of intelligence of the neighborhood. The village idiot is hardly as well known as formerly, but he is still among us, often with unexpected wisdom because he has no ax to grind, no vested interests. Most of us feel that it is adolescent to laugh at the unfortunate, but we slily smile when something occurs to remind us of our former uninhibited days.

Folk yarns love to dwell on the wisdom of children. Social demands often shield a person suspected of being a witch, but a child, as well as a cow, can penetrate the false appearance. Children's remarks about the dignified and elderly are often among our best sources of humor. There is no evil intended by such remarks; children as such are rarely catty; they just speak out. And folk tales are full of such remarks, often directed against the higher ups and the older people.

Perhaps the person who appears most often in folk tales is the younger brother who is supposed to be a weakling or even a half-wit. Nearly always he answers the mysterious 64-dollar question or kills the giant or bridges the chasm and marries the princess. His straightforward sayings are full of a kind of wry humor that shows that he is basically a genius, not a half-wit.

There has been a tendency to use a foreigner in many folk tales to show dumbness or unexpected humor. Thousands of early jokes in America concerned Irishmen, probably because the original tellers of these age-old tales localized them to fit the Irish shantymen when our railroads were being built, our canals dug. Our ancestors in England used ~~to use~~ the Welshman in the same way. On the later frontier the German and the Scandinavian had to bear the brunt of the practical joke. In the industrial areas the Italian or the Slav has been used as a type of blundering workman or philosopher. I have often thought of the Irish jokes that I heard as a child. Precious few of my contemporaries had seen an Irishman; therefore, the joke must have been inherited. Maybe the Scotch-Irish, from whom so many of us are descended, used the native Irishman as a humorous character to show the Scotch superiority. It is doubtful whether any Irishman could have recognized himself in the gags I heard so often. Nearly always there was an effort at speaking English with what passed for an Irish brogue, about as genuine as most such attempts. A whole book could be written on the so-called dialects of Americans as they have been used for propaganda, humor, satire, or serious recording. Mr. Dooley, Hans Breitmann, Ole, and many another immigrant would appear in this book.

For generations we Americans have put much of our humor into the mouth of a Negro. His dialect differs from that of others who have had to learn English in that he keeps many sounds and words that were once a part of the language of all of us. His proverbial misuse of words or mispronunciations has made many a good laugh. Nearly always the humor is mixed with some good philosophy, philosophy that unexpectedly illuminates some trouble spot in our lives. The humble station of the Negro philosopher gives an additional humorous touch to his profound view of humanity.

There is no end to the things that we regard as funny. Our descendants often laugh at us for liking some old corny joke but will shake with laughter at the same corny motif dressed up in modern words and incidents.

APPLES, THEN AND NOW

It is easy to underestimate the importance of apples in earlier days in America. With our modern methods of transportation and refrigeration, it seems almost silly for people to have worked so hard to grow apple trees and plant orchards. But it was a solid demand for apples that gave rise to such a character as John Chapman--"Johnny Appleseed." There really was such a man, who lived largely on the frontier in what came to be Ohio; he might have penetrated several of the states now to the north of us, though the legends about him would have us believe that he went everywhere in the Middle West. He died in 1845; today there are many monuments to his memory, the most famous one being the very folkish nature of the facts and fancies that have accumulated about his very name. An eminent scholar only last year, 1954, published the most nearly authentic story of his life, based on years of careful research. But the author, Robert Price of Otterbein College, Ohio, admits that for much of the strange life of the man who wanted to have apple trees ready for the pioneers is still and will remain pure folk legend.

Suppose we look at the apple for a little while. In early days, before grafting was practiced on any very large scale, seedling appletrees were the rule. Many families moving into new territory took along apple seeds as well as garden and flower seeds. Soon young trees were blooming around the new home in the clearing, apple and peach and cherry and plum. Some semi-pioneers, such as the older people whom I knew a half century ago, still believed that only seedlings were to be desired. It is said that Johnny Appleseed himself felt that grafting was a perversion of God's way with his creation. By degrees, of course, budding and grafting found their way into remote pioneer places, and some varieties of apple were known all over the country, just as they are today.

Apples had many uses. Besides the mere enjoyment of the ripe fruit as it came from the tree, there were many other uses. Dried apples constituted a major source of fruit for winter, especially in areas where winters were too variable for keeping apples indoors or outside in mounds. And apple butter in unbelievable quantities often furnished about the one steady source of "sweetening" in areas where sorghum was not raised. My own section did not make apple butter, but dried apples and their products made winter somewhat idyllic, especially with its dried-apple pies. There grew up a whole folk industry of drying apples. I helped with this late-summer work all my childhood and had a belated experience with it in the summer when I was in bad health and had to take life pretty easy for several months. I also made many a gallon of cider, primarily for vinegar, though we drank some of it in its early stages. In earlier times cider was drunk in unbelievable quantities. Cider was stored away in whole barrels and was often a daily drink from the ripening of the earliest apples until long after frost. What had not been consumed in this way became vinegar and thus added another means, besides dried apples and apple butter, of keeping fruit into the winter. It seems to me now that pickles used to occupy a much more exalted place in the diet of people than it does now. We raised gallons of cucumbers and made gallons of pickles from them. We pickled onions, green beans, peaches, crabapples, and just about everything that we could. Pickles were on our table every day in the year, in a dish beside the preserves stand or the molasses stand. Again, before the days of modern methods of canning and of refrigeration, it was not always easy to keep in any usable form many of our vegetables and fruits; hence the extended use of pickling.

As I look back at my earliest memories, I can see many an apple tree around even smallish houses. Nearly every farmer had some seedling that made his apples desired. When we exchanged work on the farm, we got a chance to sample the various apples and form judgments as to whether seedlings or grafted trees bore the best fruit. I am afraid that we very often agreed with Johnny Appleseed and the pioneers.

FIDELITY--1955

At Christmas, 1955, I had a short visit back to Fidelity that emphasized the present village and community as compared with the area I knew a half century ago. One of my students, who is very much interested in things that have been written about Kentucky, wanted to take some pictures of my Fidelity and the places that I once knew. As a result of this, we went to places that I have not seen in almost forty of the forty-nine years that I have been away. Unlike ancient ruins, mere sites of where things used to be cannot be very impressive in pictures; you cannot photograph sentiments. However, my student had me pose beside the old cistern that used to supply water for the school; this cistern is the only visible reminder of the school; even the trees that served as bases when we played Wolf over the River have long since been cut down or have died of old age. But the cistern, a mere plastered hole in the ground, remains, with its well-made neck or top, the bricks gleaming through the mortar as fresh as when they were laid seventy or eighty years ago. Our playground is grown up in weeds, briars, and wild plums thickets. At the site of my old home I stood among the bushes and was photographed; also there was a picture of the old log crib-stable, which was already oldish when I could first remember, and of my father's old office, considerably the worse for wear but crammed with the priceless antiques that were once the every-day furniture of our very unpretentious house. And there were pictures of the present consolidated school, of the family plot in Fidelity Cemetery, and even of the big gulley that used to be the road to the south of the village. Somehow that gulley, big enough to hold the houses of the present village, intrigued my student; he had never seen anything like it. But there was

no way to picture the excellent pastures in fields that used to be too poor to cultivate or the modernness of the houses, for the outside world has come to Fidelity as to other remote places. You cannot picture the warm reception I got from the old-timers who had known me, especially my nearest neighbor of long ago, who is soon to be ninety-four but is still active, mentally and physically. Through it all I felt like a stranger or one dreaming of things that may or may not have been, but the thing that brought me back to a strange and beautiful reality was the reception given me by the littlest school children, whose grandparents and great-grandparents I used to know. Something in their courtesy, their childish good manners, gripped me more than even the visits to the sites of places I once knew.

And, after all, that is what makes humanity so interesting. The mere individual goes down; the type survives. The same rugged characteristics of the second and third and fourth generations testify to the power of heredity and environment, at Fidelity or elsewhere. Living in a town where a very large percentage of the inhabitants are from somewhere else, I find that it is almost like traveling back into history to see a small community where several generations have lived and are living, carrying on, perfectly unconsciously, the traditions and customs of the older families, in spite of the standardization of most of what we do and say and wear and eat. Sometimes, in the world where most people are uprooted from their native soil, we forget how communities have grown, how tangible personalities have grown. No one is capable of writing a history, constitutional, general, and especially folk, who has not felt the resurgence in generation after generation of a community the same vigorous attitudes toward life. My visit renewed my lifelong interest in the most elusive thing that I know of, the subtle, lovable personality of a whole community.

WRAPPING UP

Somewhere along the way from the hardy pioneers, who were supposed to have had too few clothes for the severe weather they had to face, to the generation just before mine there grew up a fear of cold that was almost pathological. We used to declare that Mother wanted us to take an extra blanket or quilt for wrapping up when we were merely driving a few miles to a party, often to a dinner and on days that were not so very cold by the thermometer. And how we padded ourselves with clothes! I should say, "How our mothers padded us!" Why, when I was a little tad, I wore a red flannel "underbody," a cotton flannel body on top of that, a shirt on that, and then my coat and overcoat. Still later, when knitted underwear came into our remote place, I wore "long handles" from early cold weather until late, what seems like spring now. When I was still in short pants, I would have those long-legged things down to my ankles, and over them I would pull home-knit yarn stockings. My legs looked like some diseased members that should have been remedied by surgery, especially after I had trudged to the schoolhouse and had run a few hundred miles playing Wolf over the River. With so many clothes on, we always were too hot or too cold. Our houses, until stoves came in, were drafty, with blistering heat on one side and a regular storm of cold wind on the other. After the arrival of stoves, people stewed in their houses, rarely thinking to remove some of the heavier outer clothing, even keeping on their hats.

And ears must be a lot tougher now than formerly. Those caps with earflaps that we used seem rarely used now, except by hunters or woodcutters, and then only on the very coldest, windiest days. As I have said before, many men of my generation should be

forgiven for having ears that turn down like some of those of James Thurber's dogs in his numerous cartoons. That special set of our ears was without question helped or even started by our pulling down the ears with the flaps. If we did not have flaps on our caps, we often borrowed a discarded fascinator, and then we were literally "wrapped up," so wrapped up that we sweated copiously but still wore the wool fascinator, as directed by our mothers. It has been years since I have had anything over my ears for more than a very few minutes, even though I am often out for hours in the very bitterest weather. And I do not see very many men and practically never see boys so defending their ears against the cold. Maybe some extra blood vessels have developed in my ears to keep them so warm.

When I think of the loads of cover that I used to sleep under, I wonder why I am not flatter than a pancake rather than so round and full and fully packed." There must have been eight or ten quilts, besides home-woven wool blankets. Then there was the fat feather bed beneath and around, so that a sleeper was tucked away as snugly as a bear in his cave or hibernaculum. In an unheated room that was not so bad, but many of us slept only a few feet from what was left of the booming wood fire in the fireplace and probably kept too hot part of the night and cold the rest of it. In those days we had colds practically all the time; maybe this overheating helped as much as anything else.

And how tender the hands of men and boys used to be! Gloves were as much a part of one's being dressed in winter as shoes or socks. Wool gloves, tufted gloves, buckskin gloves--they were everywhere. It makes my hands sweat to think of such things, even when I am out in far-below-freezing weather. Gloves are still pretty common, but not compared with their former use. Evidently we are better able to stand cold or think we are; and we are healthier, too.

MAKING PROGRESS

When I recall how far humanity has advanced in some ways in the years I have been a part of it, I become rather hopeful for the human race. There has been so much, also, to dishearten one since my first memories began, that you must admit that I am either a very sanguine person or one who is cheered by little advancements. I am thoroughly conscious of the tragedy of the four wars that I can remember, of the loss of life, of the physical wounds that were left, of the heartbreaks that never get into the newspapers of the history books, of the onslaught on some of our most cherished traditions that the upsets of war bring. They are all things that burn deeply into our very souls. But there are some advancements that show us capable of "occupying and subduing the earth."

One of the things that ranks high in my estimate of advances is the rather rapidly-growing feeling that man is to work with and not against nature. On the surface that may not seem big as compared with wars or our always-publicized achievements in invention. But when you remember how wasteful and thoughtless our predecessors were, it will not be difficult to see in this change in attitude a very important advance in our career as human beings. Slowly, very slowly, an actual knowledge of our wastefulness began to get into our consciousness. One person in a hundred, maybe, saw how we were using up our heritage of soils and minerals and lumber and water resources. I can recall quite well when Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot seemed like modern reincarnations of John the Baptist, "voices crying in the wilderness." While they begged America to save its timber, its soil, forests were despoiled, steep hillsides were brought under cultivation, to be streaked with

erosion almost at once. But I have lived to see millions of acres of submarginal land retired from the plow, to see young timber appearing in what used to be worn-out old fields, which, in turn, had seemed mined forever of their ability to bring forth any vegetation. The road ahead is a long one still, but beginnings have been made that will ultimately restore some of our heritage, even though we older ones will not get to see much of the wonder of a landscape in which man is working with and not against nature.

Even more impressive to me than the actual return of some of the earth's cover is the rise of a feeling on the part of millions that it is no longer sissy to love natural things, to thrill to the commonplace events that we used to associate only with the highly poetic. A flower garden today is often the prized hobby of a business man who finds in handling the "good earth" that Liberty H. Bailey used to talk about to slightly skeptical ears a blessed relief from cares and a feeling, too, that man is still a part of soil and plants and trees and birds and "every living thing that creepeth upon the earth." Let us hope that the wasteful philosophy of the folk will gradually blend into a helpful philosophy that sees man not as an enemy of nature but as nature's own helper. Personally, it is not so difficult for oddities like me to love wild flowers and birds as it was when I was a boy; it has been many a year since I detected a sneer upon the face of someone who wondered how and why a full-grown man would wander through woods and along streams with no gun or fishing rod or even a boat paddle for company, just walking along like one slightly "tetched in the head," with no visible good accomplished. If a census were taken of all such oddities that now roam unmolested, thanks to the awakening love for nature in the wild, there would be as startling finds as we bird lovers amass every season in our annual Christmas Bird Census. Maybe we should start that sort of sount, too.

THE FOLK AND MONEY

It is the first of the year; among other things to expect at this time are the reports of the various banks. Certainly these reports look good; our area is prosperous, judging by the bank deposits. But not even the banks can report all the money, for there are still many people who are afraid to risk banks or any such thing. I wonder how much money is handled in a single county for which there is no very obvious record.

I can remember when a check was a rare thing in many homes. If any one were to be paid, it must be in "spot cash," preferably silver, for there were still some left-over fears of paper money, fears engendered by the financial chaos that resulted from the Civil War. Old-timers used to tell--and quite accurately, too--of having to give almost two dollars of paper money for one of hard coin. If a bill was suspect, a check was ever so much more so. In my own experience I have had many a handy man working around the place who would not accept a check. He seemed to feel that that little piece of paper was worthless and would probably get him into trouble when he presented it at the bank. Most checks, probably, are cashed, anyway, at the corner grocery or some other trading place. That is handy, and it might push the big bad wolf a little farther away from the holder of the original check.

The superstition that regards a two-dollar bill as unlucky is widespread, though I have never known how it arose. Though we had lots of folk things at Fidelity, I do not recall having heard of that superstition there. In fact, the earliest record of it that I have was 1913. When my wife and I were starting away on our wedding journey, I bought our railroad tickets and got back, among other change, a two-dollar bill. A man who was standing next in line to get his ticket warned me about the dangers waiting for me. Just what they

were he failed to specify. Whatever calamity was brewing seems to be taking its time. Many times after that instance I heard about the danger of accepting a two-dollar bill. Then I got my surprise. Once when a colored man was working for me, I had only a two-dollar bill to pay him; I felt, somehow, that he would not take a check. Imagine my surprise when I asked him whether he would take a two-dollar bill; he replied, smiling: "Shore, boss, as many as you can give me."

The fear of banks has caused some pathetic tragedies that I have known about. Every year that I can remember there has been someone who lost his money by having it burn up in some hidden corner of the house or be carried away with some trash or stolen by some one. Almost the whole of the life savings of an elderly couple went up in flames; I learned that the two old people were afraid of any bank. They had read of banks "busting" and felt that their money was safer in their own little cabin. Unfortunately, none of the ashes could be identified sufficiently for the old couple to get some of their money back from the government.

Back when payrolls were often heavy affairs, with silver dollars making up most of the burden, an acquaintance of mine was troubled about his money, for he was working in a tough lumber town where a fellow might get conked on the head easily. He worked out a private bank that served him for the months that he was employed there. He slipped out after dark to a pile of tin cans, put his dollars inside one, and placed the can, rusty and unprepossessing, in the pile. He was careful to keep an eye on the can and never went to his bank except after dark. He knew that no civic pride would cause any disturbance of the pile of cans. He kept his dollars from harm, avoided being robbed, and fairly soon found work elsewhere, for he was still fearful that his bank might be robbed or he overtaken by thieves.

Along with the annual reports of the banks, wouldn't you like to know how many secret hoards are still intact? I would.

A SENSE OF HISTORY

No matter what the subject being taught, one of the hardest things to get across is the idea of history. It is far easier for us to think that things are now as they have always been than to make an effort to see things historically. Though we are considerably better in our conception of time than our ancestors were, it is still pretty ridiculous to consider our distortion of things past.

Two of my numerous teachers drilled and drove into me a sense of anachronism, that is, a feeling for things that just could not have been at the time they appeared in a story or poem depicting something of a long time ago. One teacher, especially, loved to find in Vergil's AENEID evidences of the author's putting things from his own time back into the remotest period of his hero, who came from Troy about 1185 B. C. to found Rome or its early settlements. Shakespeare and his whole period jumbled ~~#####~~ time so much that it sometimes becomes funny. Of course, his actors were dressed in Elizabethan costume; hence it was not odd for Julius Caesar to appear in doublet and hose like Sir Walter Raleigh himself. It is possible that a small number of the people who attended plays then were amused by this anachronism; most of the rest probably saw nothing at all queer about King Lear, a primitive ruler of the British Isles, being clad like a courtier of their own time. But Vergil and Shakespeare are just two of the many who have unconsciously or even ignorantly projected their own time backwards.

Probably one of the funniest things that we do, a thing that shows how close we still are to the folk, is to imagine that the great men of other times were accomplished in the same ways as similar men would be today. With our modern methods of sanitation, we can hardly conceive of a time when all-over bathing was practically unknown.

One of my teachers of hygiene, in commenting on the lack of soap in other days, used to exclaim, "No wonder the faces of the prophets shone!" It has been some time since I have heard even an elderly person brag of the great foods that used to be served, back before screens were in use. Most of us, I suspect, cannot forget that when Mammy was in the kitchen, so were the flies. Occasionally, however, some worshiper of old things merely because they were old ignores common sense and breaks forth into raptures of old-fashioned cookery.

Another anachronism has to do with learning. When nearly everybody was illiterate, then a person who could read was a downright miracle. Some of the learned people that I have read about would have as much learning, on some subjects, and no more than a typical college freshman. In science, for example, a ten-year-old today actually knows more applied science than some of the scholars knew two hundred years ago, when Franklin was doing so many wonders in scientific study and in invention. Franklin and Jefferson were great scholars for their own time and for almost any time the world has yet seen, but at the time they were living the so-called scholars of the big-name colleges were teaching that birds, some of them, hibernate in mud at the bottom of ponds. As late as 1813, long after Franklin was dead and Jefferson had served his time as President, Alexander Wilson had to laugh at the ridiculous textbooks in "natural science" that proclaimed as the truth this ancient "old wives tale" of the hibernation of birds.

Within a few years of this very day, Franklin's two hundred and fiftieth birthday, I have been asked seriously about this very strange theory. Some of those who have asked were actually puzzled about the whole subject of hibernation and seemed to feel that birds could share the winter change as well as turtles or snakes. There did not seem to be any ~~refusal to believe~~ remembering that an air-breather like a bird might get water into his lungs. Sometimes we are startlingly like our ancestors in our refusal to see things historically, events or facts.

STAYING PUT

When we consider the standardization of our time, we feel both glad and sad. An earlier standardization, when most of us lived on the farm, made it easy to talk about most things, for we had had the same experiences, almost as if they had been prescribed by some invisible judge or committee. In those days, too, hosts of us, in many states, used the same textbooks, so that we had another source of a common culture. A reference to something in one of the old McGuffey Readers was as easily understood as would have been a Latin quotation to someone who had been to college. Farm lingo varied only a little from the Atlantic seaboard to the Great Plains. We had a few farm tools and implements and knew how to use them. We had helped build log buildings, had been to log-rollings, had tied behind the man with the cradle, had plowed behind two stubborn mules, had milked the family cow, had gathered corn, had made hay, and had done all the other things that farm life demanded. When some one waxed poetic and gave an interpretation of the dignity of farm labor, we understood, we "horny-handed sons of toil." At school, at church, at political meetings, and in our books we saw or heard figures that grew from our farm life. The Old Testament, so full of farm figures of speech, was easy to understand; the Parables of Jesus, in most cases, needed few or no explanations. We knew sheep and cattle and horses and plows and sweaty work: "In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread." Of course, these figures are still with us, but they often have to be explained at great length, so much so that we almost lose the effectiveness of the comparison in trying to show why the comparison itself was so effective. Within my own lifetime much of this has changed from a farm economy to an urban civilization. Imagine trying to explain Mary's Little Lamb to a small child in the heart of a huge city!

With the coming of a half dozen inventions, however, our life has been revolutionized. These inventions have again given us a common source of knowledge. Everybody knows about the automobile and its numerous relatives. Whereas I gladly spent most of my Christmas money once for a cast-iron fire wagon, what little boy today would even glance at such a primitive thing as a horse-drawn vehicle? Everybody knows about radio and television and their friends and relatives. Every hamlet has a short-wave fiend who talks to the ends of the earth. "So and So said" does not have to be explained to the average listener. Almost everybody would recognize the voice of dozens of radio speakers; and the same would hold for the face of the television actors. The up-and-coming speaker has to transfer some of his figures from horses and buggies to up-to-date accomplishments in modern invention, leaving buggies to be stared at in museums.

As a teacher who has had a hard time to keep from being stepped on by the advancing procession, I have found it hard to make my references as alive and effective as I once felt I was doing. Almost any smart saying that I drag out of my repertoire of the early days of my teaching may fall flat. If I have to stop to explain it, that usually causes the pat wise crack to cool off and the psychological moment to pass. Sometimes I fear we oldsters are as guilty of using figures of newer things we hardly understand as we are of talking a language that has already wandered away toward the past. Once at our college chapel a preacher of our town decided to use football as a source of the figures he meant to use to drive home relevant facts about a good life. He certainly had in St. Paul a good example, for that great writer knew about running footraces, about contests of strength and agility; but our modern St. Paul got his figures so mixed that we were scrambling with a football, trying to throw it through a basket, and eager for a home run. Before the speech was over, most of us were laughing at the failure to apply one well-known sport to some of the needed improvements in the lives of us and our students. The speaker would have done as well to talk about carts and horses and farm wagons and plows and sheep and such like.

BANTER

Since my own children have grown up and I live far away from my grandchildren, I do not know whether children enjoy bantering each other as much as they used to. Certainly our generation thrived on banter(Typesetter: Please do not set this up as barter.) Even though we sometimes stooped to fighting, most of our elders had ways of stepping in and making bad matters worse when we forgot and fought. Our teachers, too, were not very sympathetic when a fight started. But, except occasionally, nobody interfered when we tried our hands or tongues at saying smart or biting or cute things by way of insult. And we felt that any Mamma's darling who would get angry and try to fight when we used these expressions ought to be paddled and sent home to Mamma.

Swearing was out of the question or anything remotely resembling swearing. If we had said durn, somebody would have run at once and told somebody, who would, in turn, have spanked us and thrown in a curtain lecture that smelled of brimstone. I cannot be truthful and rule out obscenity, for I fear that obscenity was one of the native languages we learned. I regret that much of the patness of our banter cannot be put into print, at least respectable print, for it was often picturesque, funny-sounding, and quite appropriate. Barred from swearing and limited in our use of obscenity when girls were around, we used many folk similes, especially those that were uncomplimentary. "You are as ugly as a mud fence." What is a mud fence, anyway? I never saw one. But the fellow so stigmatized resented the appellation and gave back as good as he had received. "You are as crooked as a dog's hind leg." "You are as green as gourd guts." "You are fittified." "You are not your Mammy's child but an orphan that

that somebody left in a basket on your doorstep." "Why, that's nothing; your folks are so poor they live on sorghum(pronounced Soggrum) molasses and sow belly." "You don't have any more sense than a night-old baby." And so on and on, until we got tired or until some little fellow took the insults as a bit too personal and used his fists to revenge what had been said about him or his family.

Banter, however, was not and is not confined to playful youngsters. If you took banter out of college life, it would be pretty dull. Society decrees that we do not go around saying nice things about the people we like; therefore, we say catty things, just as when we were small, we pulled the pigtails of the girls we liked, never of the girls we did not like. I am always reminded of my former roommate, now, like me, an oldish fellow. If he had said a kind word to me, I would have feared for the boy's sanity. I never had to fear, for his most endearing epithets were rough expressions that would have produced a fist fight if used seriously. If I were to see him today, we would exchange insults with gusto, remembering the good old days of nearly a half century ago when it seemed smart and collegiate to be so much a "reg'ler feller."

In my many years of talking to service clubs I have found out that horse play is not confined to country youngsters or to college youth. Many of the most dignified and worthy men I have ever known go once a week to their service-club dinner and relax for a while, often carrying out banters that smack a lot of the old-fashioned country school. A mock fight between a distinguished college professor and a sedate business man in my home town caused many people to fear that service clubs are a menace. I know some middle-aged men who were present that day who still feel that the two fighters, now both dead, were in earnest. They failed to see that when the shirt was torn off one of them, there was a perfectly good dress shirt beneath and worn for the occasion. Most of us men are still potentially boys. "And you're another one."

LEFT-HANDED MONKEY-WRENCH

Last week I talked about the happiness we used to enjoy when we called each other insulting names. Closely akin to this boyish banter, which men can hardly outgrow, is a love of practical jokes. The unsuspecting little fellow has been fair game for practical jokers since before history was written, I suspect, for it seems ingrained; some of the oldest writings tell of practical jokes.

The novice in any business is always open to attack. The other fellows, sometimes a bit jealous at their friends' good fortune, love to visit the place where they work and put them to shame. From books I have read the left-handed monkey-wrench, the sky hook, and the meat auger seem to practically universal. I can recall when I felt very important when I could stand behind the counter and help Mr. Stubblefield run his store. I could fill jugs with vinegar, oil cans with coal-oil; I could weigh out or count out candy and nuts; I could even cut off lengths of cloth. And, while the loafers around the stove looked on, I could wrap up goods after a fashion, count up the bill(That was before cash registers came into use), and make proper change, sometimes having to figure a bit on the wrapping paper. It has been so long ago that I do not know whether I was ever taken for a ride by my customers or not; probably not, for I would remember being made a fool of. But many another boy got into a well-laid trap and lived to tell the tale, even until the third generation.

At Christmas, 1955, when I visited the family graves at Fidelity, I was only a few feet away from the old catalpa tree that figured in one of the practical jokes of Fidelity that backfired. Jim,

the son of the hotel keeper, stole one of his mother's sheets, tied a rope to it, and slung it over the limb of the old catalpa tree so that it could be let down right in the middle of the road. One of the neighbors had gone to "set to bedtime" with a family just beyond the graveyard and would be coming along soon. The boy with the sheet, properly reenforced with some other boys to keep from being scared, waited until the bedtime-sitter came along. Down went the sheet; instead of taking to his heels, the neighbor untied the sheet from the rope, doubled it up under his arm, and walked on home. I never did know how the joker explained to his mother the loss of the sheet.

In a small log house at one corner of Father's small place where we grew up we kept hay or farm equipment until Father took in some blacksmith's tools on a bad debt and set up a shop for my older brother. When the house was full of hay, one of our neighbor boys secreted himself in the cabin, knowing that his brother would soon be coming back from an after-supper visit to Fidelity. Unearthly groans and yells were enough to put fresh power into tired legs; the scared boy ran and is still running, strong and full of humor, though his ninety-fourth birthday will come up about the time this article comes to the printers. Fortunately, the boy who got scared did not deny being the butt of the joke; he enjoys spinning the yarn all over again, more than sixty-five years after it happened.

Trying to play practical jokes on other members of my family got me into more trouble than any other childish tendency. My sister just older than I was a very nervous child; that was just down my alley. Jumping out at her from behind a door and saying "Boo" just could not be resisted. Grabbing her suddenly at some such time caused me to get a severe scolding. Mother warned me against grabbing her again; I, like many another childish-minded person, took the advice literally. One day when my sister was drawing a bucket of water and leaning over the edge of the cistern, I poked her with a fishing pole. That wasn't grabbing, was it?

READING AT FIDELITY

Whatever else we may have been, in the better families at Fidelity, we were not ignorant of books. It astonishes me when I remember how much we read. Of course, some of it was not very high-class reading, but it would bear comparison with what many better-educated people read today. And the good thing about it was that nearly everybody had read the same things and could carry on a respectable conversation about what they had read. No one person had more than a few books, but everybody borrowed until what we had looked dog-eared and floppy.

We were long on facts, especially such facts as those we found in almanacs and such like. Four or five household remedies were advertized in annual almanacs. In among the endless testimonials as to the merits of the tonics or laxatives and the like were genuinely educative facts: phases of the moon, the morning and evening stars, the holidays, facts about countries across the ocean, smart-alec sayings and stories, and some risque yarns. Yes, all of these were educative, for even the yarns were a part of a long folk tradition. I did not know then that I would later study just such yarns and get college credit for my work, too!

Books sold by subscription were in most of the good homes. The Johnstown Flood was probably as well known to us as to the people of other parts of the state of Pennsylvania when the waters broke loose. CONQUERING THE DARK CONTINENT made us acquainted with Livingstone, Stanley, and the other explorers , particularly at the time when the Boer War was going on, and even we read avidly the weekly newspapers, little knowing that a young newspaper correspondent in South Africa, Winston Churchill, would some day be heard from in a big way. Many such books circulated, and I read some of them until I had them memorized. One such book, profusely illustrated,

was called THE BEAUTIFUL STORY and was a retelling of the famous stories of the Bible. I read and reread that book as long as I remained at Fidelity; I sometimes wish I had a copy of it to show my Sunday School classes. Just before I left home, I bought from one of my schoolteachers a book on success, very much like the later, more popular, and more sophisticated PUSHING TO THE FRONT by Orison Swett Marden. This book of moral essays bore the same relation to my reading that Cotton Mather's ESSAYS TO DO GOOD did to Franklin's. It opened to me a higher conception of ethics, though I did not know such a word then, and it would be many years before I learned it. People who owned subscription books felt proud of them but were eager to lend them to us in exchange for ours.

Novels, though frowned upon by many, circulated freely and became even more dog-eared than the types of books I have already mentioned. Most of the novels were genuine tear-jerkers: the heroine was always pure and noble, the hero arrived in the nick of time to save the heroine from the wiles of the villain, and good regularly triumphed(pretty obviously) over evil in all forms. Mary Jane Holmes's novels, all thirty-seven of them, flowed through our homes; more than a half century later I can name many of them: TEMPEST AND SUNSHINE, DORA DEANE, LENA RIVERS, etc., etc. I got so I could read the first chapter of one of these and prophesy just how the whole thing would turn out some thirty chapters later.

COMFORT and AMERICAN WOMAN were two pulp magazine that we took regularly. In them we found continued novels or stories that kept us breathless for weeks and months. ST. ELMO appeared in twenty-two issues, each installment good for a bandanna handkerchiefful of tears. Occasionally some other pulp magazines strayed into our neighborhood, but these two, like Abou Ben Adhem's name, "led all the rest." We read and read, and still some of what we thus learned remains, not entirely covered up with years of college study and teaching. Before you laugh at us, recall how much good stuff you have read lately or even since I left Fidelity.

MEMORIZING POETRY

Our country teachers at Fidelity and Podunk used to make us memorize lines upon lines of verse; some of the poems were classics, but others were merely rhymes. And some us learned to memorize quickly and rejoiced when we were asked to "say our pieces." Most of our memory work came from our McGuffey Readers, which were used so long that, if we had forgotten, almost anyone present could have prompted us. To call the roll of those pieces would be to review almost the whole of literary training for millions of people: "Casabianca," ("The boy stood on the burning deck."), "Mary's Lamb," "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star," "Curfew Shall Not Ring Tonight," "Harry and the Guide Post," "Little Gustava," "Sweet and Low"--take up from there and go as long as you like. Even though the little fellows who said some of the simple ones I have mentioned did not know how to read the longer, more difficult pieces, they had heard them recited over and over and later came to know them as old friends when they found these poems in the Fifth or Sixth Reader. Occasionally we or our parents found a piece in the newspapers or the pulp magazines and felt that here would be another chance to show off the young hopeful reader. As we took, sometimes, THE ATLANTA CONSTITUTION, I ran into Frank L. Stanton, with his rhymes in Negro dialect, many of which have been set to music. In HOME AND FARM I got acquainted with our own Kentucky version of Stephen Collins Foster and by some regarded as the greater, Colonel Will S. Hays. Hays wrote an innumerable lot of sentimental songs, "Mollie Darling" still being popular as sung by Eddie Arnold. In fact, it could almost be said that that one old song as revived by Arnold brought him more money than Hays was ever able to make by writing songs or running steamboats. Hays also wrote under the pen-name of Old Hayseed; it was these poems, very much after the

style of James Whitcomb Riley of a later date than Hays's early work: a picture of an idyllic country life by a rural philosopher.

Not much has been made of the enormous array of religious songs that we all memorized. Hymnbooks were scarce; lining the hymn was at first a real service to the congregation, but later it was purely ornamental, for all of us knew the words and music to dozens, almost hundreds, of songs. The odd thing about all this is that, right in the midst of some program, with no slant towards old times, there will pop into my memory some phrase right out of those classic hymns. Isaac Watts, William Cowper, John Newton, John and Charles Wesley of the older writers, and Fanny J. Crosby, John Greenleaf Whittier, John Hughes of the later ones, found us in our remote little corner of creation and interpreted for us some of the noblest truths that man has ever discovered. Of course, we mixed these nobler things with some pretty trifling stuff from the popular songbooks of the time and spent as much good time in memorizing trash as in learning lasting poetry.

Nobody told us when we were learning good or bad stuff. By some strange freak one of our twice-a-week papers ran in the Thursday issue each week a whole double column of famous poems. The very appearance of this column intrigued me. I cut out dozens of poems, practically memorized whole pages of them, and saved them for a scrapbook that I still have. I thus met "Oft, in the Stilly Night," extracts from "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage," famous soliloquies from Shakespeare (Portia's "quality-of-mercy" speech, Hamlet's "To be or not to be," Jaques's "All the world's a stage"), and shorter poems without number. Tell me that living away off on the edge of things puts one beyond cultural and worth-while things! If shut up in a prison or confined to my bed and without a chance to read a line, I could still rattle off good poetry for hours or days. Those rural teachers did a good job of this with many of us.

SACREDNESS OF PROPERTY

There was a time when one's belongings meant so much that he was ready to fight for them. They were not necessarily valuable, but they belonged to him. That made them have a peculiar value that money cannot represent. Of course, there is still much of this feeling among us, but many modern customs have made inroads into this sacred realm.

Suppose we begin with a carriage, which was and is and may always be a symbol of being somebody. When the buggy was a mark of being well-to-do or, at least, respectable, there was a great pride in the vehicle. It was not dated as such and did not have to be replaced every so often by a new model. What had done for a buggy when I could first remember was still respectable when I left Fidelity but not long after, for automobiles came in and set a new style. Before some people could own a buggy or the acme of family carriages, the family surrey, the new car came along; the fanciest buggy or surrey soon took a back seat or, more accurately, a dusty place under the shed. For a long time it seemed too sacred a thing to destroy or even to give to the small boys to play with; chickens roosted on and in it, English Sparrows built nests in crannies of it, mice and rats and squirrels sought it out for material for nests. By and by, when it was apparent that the automobile had come to stay, the old vehicle's room was needed as a place to store a tractor or some other farm machinery, and the out-of-date old vehicle went the way of used-up human institutions.

Furniture is another thing that has had many ups and downs in being important. For a long time the few pieces that some people had were kept immaculate, if that word can be applied to an object

that was embalmed in paint every spring until its original wood was buried deep to await a later time when antique seekers would remove the many layers of paint and let the natural wood again appear. In many a home that I knew, however, a small streak of good luck in the family finances caused a general disuse of the old things, which were relegated to the shedroom of the smokehouse or stored in an attic or even thrown away. Some fine old beds became settees on the front porch. A few people that I knew never lost a sort of sentimental feeling for the old stuff, even though they would not have let it stay around in plain view. And then some granddaughter or neighbor girl got the antique craze and began to search out the old attics and shed rooms. What had been rejected, like the cornerstone or coping stone in the Bible phrase, "became the head of the corner" again. I will probably not live another hundred years and see this wave of antique-hunting die down. If history runs true to form, there will be another wave of discarding the old stuff, which may not be strong enough to endure the interregnum before another time brings antiques back into style.

Clothes used to mean a lot more than they do now, though some of mine have been around long enough for me to get sentimentally attached to them. However, I am unlike one of my colleagues, who, not more than five years ago, still had a pair of good shoes that he had worn at the end of World War I. I think of an elderly lady whom I knew, long after I left Fidelity, who did not want to buy a new hat to replace the very ancient one she was wearing; she remonstrated with her daughter-in-law for suggesting a new hat; the old one was still not worn out. Frankly, it is hard, even in our civilized time, to give up an old coat or a hat that has seen too many years or a pair of shoes that have ceased to look like shoes and look like our distorted feet. Maybe there is poetry in the very rapid change that we have to face; as yet no big poet has attached a poem to this hard fact of everyday life; we still like to think of the old, the long-known, the out-of-style, even.

FIDELITY AND THE WORLD

It is not merely a love for the quaint customs of the people of Fidelity that has made me write and speak so often about the little village and its people. Of course, it was my home, for which I offer no apologies; I do not want to cash in on having come from Fidelity, and I certainly do not want any sympathy for having done so. After all, if I could know Fidelity and could present it faithfully, I would be a great writer, a great sociologist, a great historian.

Much, too much, of history has been a generalization with insufficient examples of what the author was writing about. In my own lifetime many historians have turned to the richness of quaint representative people for an interpretation of what history is about; and their works, though often frowned on by dry-as-dust writers of the old school, seem to be sure of serious influence on history writing from now on. I have come to suspect any book on any subject that states that all the people of any time and place did this or that. Humanity has never been that unified, for good or for evil. And, be it understood, my own Fidelity was no exception to this rule. We had near-saints and plenty of near-sinners, besides the common run of in-betweeners. I am glad that I grew up where there was no absolute agreement as to religion; I wish my neighborhood could have known that there are some virtues in Republicans and that there were some in Federal soldiers in other days. With that one exception, the variety of opinions among us was commendable. It gave us a source of vigorous arguments that died down when people needed help. Since my father as the country doctor had to administer to all the sick, he could not afford to be too particular about what his patients thought about this or that.

In spite of the smallness of my little world, tucked in behind Blood River and its muddy bottoms, it was not too great a jump when I left Fidelity and went out, somewhat like Abraham, hardly knowing whither. Fidelity, that is, was a small cosmos, with just about everything in it that the bigger world has.

Strangely, until I did leave home, I felt that we were a remote little group of people and that everybody outside our boundaries had a better deal than we had had. Unfortunately, many another person has thought the same thing about his area or his life or his generation. No one who ever came to our school or into our home, so far as I can now recall a half century later, reminded us that it was good to be alive now, that heroism is not of any time or place alone. I can confess, however, that it took me only a few years to discover that Fidelity or any other place is as much a part of things as more renowned places. I began to pride myself, long ago, on having had such a close-up view of humanity before I had ever been twenty miles from home. Not that I intended to go back, then of now, to stay. My way led elsewhere, not through any inferiority of Fidelity or its people. Maybe I can thus see the little community somewhat objectively without losing the sentimental feeling that always attaches to one's own birthplace, no matter how humble it may have been. And that is what I seek in a well-written history: a truthful, feeling view of humanity at a certain time and place. If a writer deliberately presents his time and place cynically or fails to see them as representative, I have great difficulty in reading more than one chapter of his book, no matter how much it may have been praised by reviewers. I have long loved Thoreau and his feeling that his Concord was and is a cross section of the whole world. And I have, almost as long, admired Mark Twain's finding that, in his world wanderings, he met people like those he had known along the Mississippi River.

WINTER IN THE COUNTRY SCHOOL

One of my former students recently sent me a clipping from the KANSAS CITY STAR that took me, not to Kansas City, but to Fidelity, for it was about school days in winters of the long ago. I do not know why I had not thought of this subject before now; anyway, here goes.

Of course, our schools at Fidelity, except the subscription schools, ended at Christmas; hence there was not often a bad winter spell that made an impression on us. In our part of the world real winter comes more often in middle or late January. Only once can I recall a really bitter winter in December when I attended school at Fidelity, and that experience was almost identical with the one described so effectively by Margaret Ballard Wilson in the KANSAS CITY STAR. There had been a long spell of rainy weather in early December; suddenly the cold air moved in and froze the muddy roads, also bringing a good-sized snow on top of the ice. School lacked only a few days of being over for that session. Some ten of us tough ones persisted in going on the bad days. Whether it had been planned thus originally or not, our teacher decided to make this last week or so a writing school. We practiced straight and curved strokes to our heart's content, sitting as near the two roaring stoves as possible. There was no especial order, and none was needed. Our teacher relaxed almost as much as she did when she went home to spend the night with us pupils. It was too bad to stay out long at recess; we even ate our lunches around the stove, an almost unheard-of thing at Fidelity. There were hardly any two children of the same size or in the same books. That meant that we got individual attention. I was large enough to hear some of the little fellows spell or read and had already resolved that I would be a teacher "forever and a day," like James Whitcomb Riley's "Old sweet heart." We "told tales," played practical jokes, even on the teacher, and had probably

the best times we had ever had at Fidelity and its one-room school. The teacher read to us; we said pieces nearly every day, even though most of us knew every piece by memory before the little girl or boy rose and made a bow. As I recall it now, our dismissal time was run up a little; we trudged home through the snow and under the gray skies, probably a little more in love with school than ever before. And we later lorded it over the tender ones who could not endure the long walk to the schoolhouse, for we had really felt some of the joys of having a private tutor. Through all the half century and more since that winter school I have felt more kindly toward the memory of that teacher and have respected her for her rising to the occasion and making the few of us feel that education is a good thing to be around.

In two winters there were subscription schools at Fidelity, either in the schoolhouse or in the lodge hall above the union church. Most of these winter students, it seems to me now, were grown boys and girls, some of then already voters. In one in the schoolhouse the teacher taught "Snow-Bound," "Evangeline," and "The Courtship of Miles Standish." I can still see a long line of grown boys and girls stretched across the front of the schoolroom, standing to await their turns at reading. It was queer then that they pupils faced the audience; I know now that the teacher, the same one that taught the writing school, wanted the rest of us little tads, too young to be reading such big poems, to hear them read well. I can repeat many a line that was read then; in fact, I memorized whole passages of the three poems merely by hearing them read by the "Big'uns." Snow fights fade into a dim past, but those poems as read in our remote little school are alive and full of emotion yet to me and, I hope, to many others who, like me, were too little to be one of the readers.

"BIG NATURAL"

One of my brothers loved to tell of his childish remark when he had asked Father about the degenerate toe on a horse's foot. Father, probably not knowing anything for sure about degenerate toes and probably having a very meager knowledge of the evolution of the horse, said, "Why, that's natural." My brother replied, "It's a mighty big natural." Just what the boy meant is more than anyone except a trained psychologist could say, but the reply has intrigued me for many years, since it shows a groping for expression and for knowledge that we do not often associate with a small boy. Natural, to my brother, probably meant something very easily explained, something so obvious that no explanation could be needed. The minute something more subtle appeared, it was "big natural," a synonym for mystery and wonder.

Often in this column I have spoken of the folk fear of the strange or new. It is ingrained in all of us. We know Podunk and Fidelity and Beechy Fork Creek and Blood River and even distant places like Cherry Corner and Murray. But beyond those lies wonder; things outside our immediate realm are too big natural for us. When fifteen miles was a tremendous journey for any one of our acquaintance to have made in a day, beyond our farthest hills was as strange as Far Cathay. And, along with the wonder of it all, was a fear that there might be something queer or even wicked in remote places. Like all primitive people, we felt that where we lived was the center of things; even the Eskimos call themselves by a name that means "The People." Our ancestors called themselves "Theode," which, being translated, is identical with the meaning of the Eskimo word. Beyond the horizon dwelt strange people, strange from our point of view. They might be somewhat like us; they might not, and there was where the wonder of it all came in.

If our wonder and suspicion were merely ours and would yield to travel and education, all might be well with the human race. But just today I read the wise statement of a famous newspaper man who thinks that any one educated as a teacher is ex officio a dumbbell. He needs to get into his buggy and drive even beyond Cherry Corner before he writes another essay for his syndicated column. Some years ago a representative of Phi Beta Kappa, the honorary society in many colleges for scholarship, spoke at our local group of Phi Beta Kappas. In the group were graduates of a half dozen of the greatest colleges in America, where they had been chosen, because of their scholarship, as members of this exclusive and highly respected society. In the course of the evening the secretary of P. B. K. strongly said that no teachers college could ever hope for admission to the society; no chapter could ever be formed at such a place. I was ashamed of the utter ignorance of our guest and regretted my dime that went to pay my share of his dinner. With such an attitude toward scholarship, what can the powers that be in P. B. K. hope for the future? Is scholarship a something that can be obtained only in some place, properly guarded by conservatives and ruled over by a faculty that has not changed its point of view since the Revolutionary War, when P. B. K. arose? I must confess that my Phi Beta Kappa key, which I still wear, has never seemed so valuable since then. "Me and my wife, my son John and his wife; us four and no more" might well be the motto of any such willful disregard of scholarship wherever found. And yet that very organization has fairly raised the roof to force educated circles to accept their interpretation of what is tolerance. "Big natural," I would say.

T + C

EXIT THE MULE

From the earliest days of this column I have often said tender words about the old family nag and horses generally, because these long-domesticated animals have ceased to have the importance they once had, before our world was mechanized. It suddenly occurred to me to-day that I have shed no appropriate tears for the mule, that other useful animal that is so fast becoming a past institution. What waked me up was a small item in a newspaper that told how, in a stock show of some importance, no mules were to be entered this year, for the first time in the history of the show. There was a long list of events in which horses figured, for horses have not completely vanished, even though the downright necessary horse is no longer around. Our horses are luxuries rather than the creatures-of-all-work that they used to be. It is a distinction to own a horse, to have your picture made with it drawing a vehicle or you perched on a fancy saddle. Who ever has his picture made with a mule for company?

It used to be otherwise. The mule, with its tough body and persistence, could do the roughest work in the world and still have enough crude sense of humor to chase away other livestock as if it were the barnyard watchdog. Plowing in a newground must have been as tough on the mule as on the boy, but the mule seemed pretty fresh after a whole day of being yanked around by hidden stumps and roots. The boy would have hated to admit it, but he was tired enough to give up supper even, but it would never do to admit it before bigger boys and girls. Sometimes, when I was that boy and Jenny, my own mule, had pulled the plow all day, any cow or calf around in the barnyard when I turned my mule loose had better start running, for Jenny was the born enemy of anything easy-going. Life just did not seem to

get Jenny down.

On the farm where I boarded, almost a half century ago when I taught my first school, there were a dozen mules from across the Mississippi River, big Missouri mules, that had been rented for the breaking season, when the summer sun was the hottest and the weeds thick and high. It was too hot for even mules to be put into stalls; they had to be fed in troughs out in the barnyard. And yet those big fellows, after a hard day of breaking wheat ground, would carry on like a group of teenagers on a picnic, chasing each other away from the trough, kicking up their heels, and laughing a sort of mule laughter at the antics of themselves and the other barnyard creatures. I wondered then and still wonder at the marvelous energy that those mules had and wonder whether they were able to transfer it to their successor, the tractor.

No one ever thought of a mule as other than a beast of burden. He was never pampered as was the old family nag or the saddle horse. The mule seemed born for a life of drudgery; the nearest to any picture of him as a work of art showed him and his mate drawing a particularly heavy load or being appraised by some prospective buyer who wanted plenty of grit and muscle in the animals he would buy.

In my walking all over fields to study birds I now rarely see a mule of any description, either a small "jack-rabbit" one like my mule Jenny or the big, sturdy-built ones like those Missouri mules I knew in Hickman County in 1907. There may be a saddle horse or two, a pony for the little children, but rarely a mule. Just what does Missouri produce since tractors took over? And how can a Negro farm hand philosophize to his tractor? And what has taken the place of the balky mule, the one that could show more stubbornness than any farm boy even, that exhausted all our vocabulary and still looked as determined and mulish as ever? The mule was a useful critter, never humble, but, like steam, capable of great energy when forced to expend it.

THE CROSS-CUT SAW

Though I could confess to some years, I do not recall the days before the coming of the crosscut saw. But my older neighbors often told me of the laborious work of cutting down huge trees for building logs, with only a sharp ax for a tool. And many a log house at Fidelity and elsewhere showed plainly their being chopped down and the ends squared off with the trusty ax. Some of those houses survive now, but they are covered up, usually, with weather-boarding and cannot easily be visited to verify this essay.

When the cross-cut saw came along, it added new life to the lumberman and the farmer. In earlier times farmers often deadened the big trees, the ones that would be worth a king's ransom today, partly because they were too big to be handled in house or barn raising. A season or two of standing in the cornfield would make most of these trees dry enough to be burned or partly burned away. I can recall having seen many such stumps, ten to twenty feet tall, blackened by fire, but still testifying to the big forest of which they were a part before cross-cut saws got numerous. With the new saw, logs could soon be prepared for the building or could be snaked or hauled to the sawmills. The ax had to take a backseat or be merely a helper, cutting off small limbs or chopping a groove on the side of the tree to facilitate its fall before the saw.

That same saw had other uses that I soon learned. With a crudely constructed sawhorse, we could saw up wood at the woodpile, wood that had been hauled up in three-stick lengths. Of course, it was still customary to use the ax on some of these, but anything beyond a few inches in diameter was much better sawed, and faster, too. A young boy soon learned how to take his end of the cross-cut and pull or push in the standardized manner. Some older brother was always around to accuse him of riding the saw as it returned to the other side of the log and lifting up on it as the small boy's turn came

to pull. As a little brother I claim immunity to testify in this case, for I might incriminate myself. If accused Communists can dodge behind the Fifth Amendment, why not a much-troubled little brother, who wanted to be a big boy but had a hard time qualifying?

At Fidelity there was an unwritten law that no respectable man would allow his wife to chop wood. That was supposed to be menial and even disgraceful. But Friend Wife could pull her half of the cross-cut without losing caste, especially if there was a severe need for wood or stovewood. Even then no woman bragged about her ability to pull her half of the saw. Only a few young wives, whose children were not yet big enough to help in the sawing seemed to feel no shame at having done such crude man's work as this.

Long before a little fellow could take the saw handle in hand and thus proclaim himself a big boy, he had a task that would allow him to be outside with the men folks and seem to have a part in what was going on. He could sit on the log to be sawed, especially if it were so small that some extra weight was needed to keep it from moving each time the saw ripped through the wood. Many a time I did this very necessary labor and felt, each time, that I was growing up. However, I did not realize how easy a task it was until I graduated to the saw handles and was expected to pull my share. Long ago I suggested a monument to the water boy of all time. Today I would like to suggest a marker of some sort to commemorate the little fellow who sat on the log and held it still while Pappy and Big Brother reduced the log to stovewood or wood for the fireplace. There are many monuments much more foolish than that and with far less emotion and ~~memory~~ memory behind them.

"SCRATCHING GRAVEL"

In one of my freshman classes recently I was speaking about how difficult it was and is to get a start in life in anything that really matters. I spoke of how my generation had to work hard to keep ahead of the one just behind us. Then I told the youngsters that they would have to "scratch gravel" to keep ahead of the next generation, the one that is still unborn, that they had nothing to fear from us older fellows, as we would soon be past working. I thought I had made a good philosophical point, even though it hurts a bit to think that my group will soon be sitting around spinning yarns about the good old days. Strange to say, there was hardly a look on any of the faces of the thirty students that showed even a remote understanding of what the elderly teacher meant. Of course, they could tell by my tones that I was meaning that they would be competing with younger and ever younger generations, but why "scratch gravel"? Then I had to do what any story-teller feels is very humiliating: I had to explain myself. Most of the students had seen mules, a few, but none had had the experience of trying to drive a team of them up a gravelly hill with a big load on the wagon. I did not act out the scene, but I could have, for I saw it enough, long ago, to know just how the mules would almost stretch themselves out on the ground in their efforts to pull the load. And the gravel would fly in all directions as they started the load again after a halt for rest or a halt because they were mules. That figure pleases me and says something that no high-falutin words can quite reach, but I must learn that I have outlived the mule as an ordinary, every-day part of the lives of my students.

It was not given me to know much about oxen and their hard, slow work, though I did see some ox teams at work hauling logs out of the muddy bottoms. By the time I had grown big enough to drive

a team, it was made up of our two little mules: Jenny, my own critter of blessed memory, and Beck(short, I suppose, for Rebecca).

We lived where in a few minutes you could be driving your team up a gravelly hill or across a bottomless sheet of mud, for our homes were on a gravelly ridge close to the bottoms. If Beck, our temperamental mules, was not contemplating any unnecessary meanness, we got along, mud or gravel to the contray nothwithstanding. But Beck had been raised as a pet because her mother had died. This intimate contact with hard-headed boys and men must have given her some characteristics that were almost too bad to belong to a mule. With no obvious provocation, Beck would stall, with an empty wagon as quickly as with a heavily loaded one. Language, as far as it could be used without consequences, flailing with blacksnake whips, and sometimes a fit of tears made no impression on Beck. She had refused to "scratch gravel," and that was that! One of my most vivid memories of Beck, now long a denizen of wherever mules go, concerns a load of stovewood blocks that I was to haul up from the bottom. It was a cold, raw winter day. I had got to the newground, loaded my blocks, setting them end up in the wagon bed, and had started home. Just at that moment it began to snow a wet, blinding snow. As we creaked along the rutted woodland road, the front wheel on Beck's side ran against a hidden root and temporarily halted operations. Beck put on her best act: she reared, jerking the hames out of the collar. That meant that I would have to stop my hauling long enough to put them back and then try again. The act was repeated until I finally decided that I would have to unload all my blocks. The snow grew worse and worse. With an empty wagon, the act recommenced, but Beck seemed to sense a lighter load or had decided that her joke had gone far enough. I managed to get the wagon over the offending root, reloaded my stovewood blocks, and, too angry to say another word, drove my inoffensive-looking team through the snow back home.

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UP AND ABOUT

It has been many a day since I have heard of some one who is "up and about," though I suppose that many people are in that admirable condition. At Fidelity and elsewhere, when we asked about some one who had been sick, we often got that answer. It was a pleasant , for it indicated that a member of our race was back in circulation, ready for whatever needed to be done.

As I look back now, it seems to me that even the weather had to take second place in our conversations; we talked chiefly about our aches and pains or ones we had had. Of course, my father's being a doctor had something to do with this incessant talk about health, but I think it was pretty general, whether people were giving in their symptoms or not. Most of the people whom I knew were young; even they had their aches and pains and talked about them all the time. Actual old people were scarce and were not especially more achy than the rest of us. We had colds all the time, it seems now, and did not mention a cold except as a bad one. Every summer nearly everybody had chills; these hateful shakes had to be pretty bad to prevent our getting around between chills and giving in our complaints. Fortunately, "agers" skip a day and thus allow a bit of normal life to assert itself. On such a day our loafers' "j'int" crowd could assemble, tell about their shakes the day before, and get ready for the next day's shake. There was not much fun in being sick if you did not get to tell about it.

There was a time when I felt considerable contempt for this endless complaining, but I have softened up a little lately. Those people at and near Fidelity whom my father doctored <u>were</u> sick. They had been raised on malaria and its accompanying chills and fever; they had never known what it is to be free from the debilitating effects of this sly disease.

Much of what passed for laziness was the aftereffect of malaria. With weakened resistsnce to disease, these friends of mine often succumbed to tuberculosis and just about anything else that was wandering around seeking a place to land. Mosquitoes had not been suspected by most people; hence it was still a matter of poisonous night air that caused the trouble. From some very bitter memories, I can testify that we did feel bad and maybe got a little relief from our aches and pains and general lassitude by endlessly giving in our testimony about the state of our health.

This phrase "up and about" had another ring to it, a sort of triumphant sound that meant that even chills and fever and other human ills had not overcome us. It soon got transferred to other matters than mere health. A person who was "going places" was often "up and about." Maybe he had a new rubber-tired buggy or a high-stepping horse; maybe he had bought some fine new clothes at the county seat; maybe he had overcome a rival or two to win a pretty girl. At least he was "Up and about" in a very thought-provoking way. He had arrived. I got so tired hearing about symptoms that I rejoiced at knowing there were people who sometimes did not ache, that it was normal to feel good, to eat like a horse, to sleep like a log, to be bursting with energy. Maybe that is what the philosophers mean when they say that the poet is in a perpetual state of convalescence, gaining joyously every day a new foothold on life and health and hopefulness. The only two times in my life when I have been dangerously ill were in late winter. Spring and my returning energy came on together. Those two springs, many years apart, seem among the best seasons of my life. I had been sick; I was now up and about; life was still good; birds could sing and trees put out leaves; the long darkness of a sick room could be exchanged for the bright out-of-doors. I have often wished that I could have put those two springs into poetry; maybe some verse could tell what I mean and what others mean by "up and about."

"Do you believe in fairies?" Maude Adams used to ask in PETER PAN, and anyone who ever saw her act could almost accept any kind of fairy mythology. It is pretty obvious that many people are willing to be convinced about fairies and other invisible creatures. So many onslaughts have been made on our imaginations that some people take refuge in the more primitive beliefs, maybe as a sort of compensatory act, to get even with modern life for being so cruel to our dreams and beliefs. Just about everything that we do is subjected to such scientific weighing and measuring that we want to run away to some Isle of Avalon or other fairy place to get cured from modernness.

Almost daily I am reminded of how thin our scientific approach is to many of us. We get up-to-date shots for this or that, proud of being sensible and modern; we buy the best cars or T V 's or radios or household gadgets, unwilling to let anybody get ahead of us. We send our children to college or to expensive camps or on great trips, determined to keep up with the Joneses. But hardly a day passes when I do not hear some echo of long-ago beliefs, held by my students of all sorts and conditions. Some of the ones who have had most would be the first to jump if someone suddenly jumped from behind a tree and cried "Boo." There is no social rule against jumping on such occasions; there is no disgrace attached to suddenly reacting to a nervous strain. In fact, old, old nature is still back in the minds of us, sometimes buried by a lot of modern thinking and acting; when we are caught off guard, we revert to primitiveness before we can remember that we are moderns. If it were daylight all the time, we might soon lose some of our primitive fears; but night comes on, and we travel pretty far back into prehistory. Things that seem perfectly harmless in daylight assume some fearful forms in the twilight: what should be an ordinary stump becomes a bear or a wolf or some unnamable object that wavers in the dim light and seems to move.

To even the best of us, assuming that you and I are two of those, there are many things that we cannot explain. Maybe we assume, when we are awake and sane, that there is a logical explanation for everything. If even the doctor does not know what causes my aches and pains, he or some one will ultimately find out. It isn't witchcraft or the evil eye; some allergy may be the guilty party; some trick of digestion or of chemistry may have caused the upset stomach. Anyway, a pill or two will allay any undue fear until time can heal our pains. For many of us that is all that is necessary; but sometimes no rememdy is forthcoming; then we are thrown back on primitive thinking, and it is a pretty wise person who does not resort to some old remedy that time has hallowed. Of course, it may not be effective, but it will do not harm. Probably a little catnip tea would not hurt anybody's baby, especially when you have tried just about everything else and failed. Many people whom I know would not dare to mention their return to old-time remedies in a pinch, but an honest confession by a few hundred people might reveal some startling things.

But the benign aspects of the invisible have their power, too. A summary of the sane, logical acts of anybody seems often to fail to account for the strange and excellent results. Why not call the good results the work of fairies? More religious ones would use a different term; less religious ones would still be searching for some unknown factor not yet properly known. Even the psychologists would step in and explain some blissful mood of ours by calling up for us some long-forgotten experience of ours that we were even uncounscious of when it occurred. But the fact remains that many people whom I know actually believe in fairies and some do not hesitate to say so. Of course, saying so brings a laugh or a lifting of eyebrows, but are you sure that you are free from this ancient belief? Are you sure that you have consistently escaped from ages of inherited beliefs merely by studying a few years in books and associating briefly, too, with modern, matter-of-fact people?

TIPPING YOUR HAT

Now I have lived through a complete cycle, a rather strange one, too. Just this week, when it was quite cold(mid-April) I wore a hat to school. When I passed some freshmen girls, I, quite unconsciously, tipped my hat, very much as I would have done in 1912, when I first began my college teaching. One of the girls giggled at the strange custom, and I felt quite cheap. I know her well and am sure that she was not trying to be rude, for she comes of a good family and has excellent manners. But to see a fat, middle-aged man lift his hat, when most men do not wear hats and do not lift them, must have been too much to repress. I soon forgot my slight chagrin at my age-old deference to women and its reception. With a memory that refuses to cover up things, I recalled how we children used to smile at the older men who would walk the entire length of Sulphur Springs Church before they removed their hats. In fact, they took off their hats just as they started to sit down, whereas we had been taught to remove ours just as we entered the door. Everybody wore hats then; to have been without one would have subjected us to suspicion of being minus a few marbles. Oddly enough, when I am bare-headed, which is most of the year, it never occurs to me to lift my hand in salute as if I were touching my hat brim; I have at least progressed that far from my former habits. A good friend of mine used to tell gleefully how, when he had been working in his garden on Saturday and would come to the dinner table in his overalls, he would find himself eating as he did when he was a boy on the farm. Normally he had quite excellent manners and did not seem about to starve to death when he smelled or tasted food. On Sunday or ordinary days, when he had on his best clothes, he could slow down without an effort and "mind his manners" perfectly.

This morning I met on the walk across the campus a good-looking man student. I am so afraid that I will forget the friendliness that I like very much that I often go out of my way to speak. Fortunately, most students will speak warmly and call me by name. That satisfies my vanity, for I want to know everybody on the campus, whether he is my individual student or not. But the boy today did not even grunt when I spoke. He did not so much as cut his eye in my direction. Now, that hurt, for I cannot believe that anybody's college can run long without a few manners. Maybe it is old-fashioned and even tacky to speak to all and sundry. Maybe it is country, which, to many people, is about the worst word in the vocabulary. But my small college is country in origin and proud of it; we are not rich and aristocratic; we are of the soil. The college itself is close enough to the country that odors of manure spread on the rich farms drift into the buildings on windy spring days. Most of our products will go out to teach, a very large percentage of them in small towns, even smaller than Bowling Green. The virtues of plain, old-fashioned country people like me, and like you who read this column, will be expected of the teachers at the county high school or the big new consolidated grade school.

Through the years I have watched this friendliness and have usually been well pleased with its genuineness. It certainly does not have to be. It could be dispensed with, for it is a good deal of trouble to speak to hundreds of people daily, many of whom you do not know and may never know. But I cannot find myself believing this; I think the integration of young people into a cultured group demands some recognition of each other, however country or monotonous it may seem to some who have not grown up in such an atmosphere. As with tipping the hat, this custom may pass, but it strikes me as very much more fundamental. A boy can be well-mannered without removing or touching his hat when he meets a girl, but I wonder whether he is sufficiently minding his manners when he fails to recognize, in some way, the presence of the boy or girl he meets daily. That may be the Fidelity that is still in me a half century later, but that is what I believe, anyway.

"WHERE DO YOU LIVE AT?"

If you think that folk psychology is wearing thin or that radios and television sets have transformed human nature, you should come with me on some of the trips that I take to study birds. Every spring, when I know it is time to hear Whip-poor-wills and their cousins, the Chuck-will's-widows, I go out into certain areas where I am most likely to hear these night callers. On several occasions I have been spotted by suspicious people who cannot understand what a fat, middle-aged man might be doing by sitting in his car by a roadside and listening intensely or else walking up and down a lonely country road waiting for seven o'clock and the first nightbird songs to happen at the same time. This spring I had the usual experience: I drew to the side of a country road about a half hour before sunset and waited for the daytime birds to sing their evening songs and the night birds to take over. A rather rough-looking fellow, about as old as I, came by in his car, stopped, and politely asked me whether I was having car trouble. I carefully explained that I had come out to hear Whip-poor-wills. His only comment was: "Where do you live at?" I hastened to explain that I was a college professor in his neighboring good-sized town and that I studied birds for a hobby. He drove away in his car and on up a rough, rocky, winding country road, probably wondering what sort of lie I would tell the next fellow who asked to relieve me from any trouble my car might be having. Soon after he left, the night birds began their songs, and I drifted back to my home, convinced again that whatever someone does that is not a matter of general knowledge is a thing to be suspected and questioned. I was not near any place where a cold spring flowing down from a hillside might have been utilized for what cold spring water is said to be very useful; in fact, I was only a few hundred yards from a great national highway, where dozens of cars whizzed by while my suspi-

cious friend was putting me through a standard set of questions when a strange character drifts into a remote community.

By way of contrast, two days later I stopped in front of a country church that I have often visited, to listen to the birds in the trees around the building. Another man came by, one of my former students; he greeted me warmly, asked how many birds I had seen that morning, and seemed greatly pleased that I was observing birds around the old church and in the churchyard where sleep some of the distinguished people of that excellent country community. I suppose that this second man could name no more birds than the first one, but his contact with the big world had taught him that such queer ducks as ornithologists do exist and that a man wandering around with a pair of binoculars slung around his neck is not trying to spy out a still or other questionable industry. The gap between the two men is one that is hard to bridge; without doubt, the first man was as sincere in his neighborliness as the second; he just didn't know what a fellow could be doing studying birds.

Though nearly fifty years separate me from Fidelity, I still know the folk feeling behind this strange suspiciousness. I never knew any one in our remote little world to suffer any physical harm from being a stranger, but we watched everybody who entered our deadend community, knowing that we had two chances at him: as he came in and as he turned around and went out. Sly hints or even direct questions usually brought the information we sought, and then we told everybody else about the wandering "Gypsy" who was camping down by Sulphur Spring or was driving through to the river in his dusty wagon. We certainly wished him and his bedraggled family ~~any~~ no harm; we wanted to know who he was and where he was going to and where he lived at.

IT'S THAT TIME

Though it is true that I am writing this little article in the midst of Blackberry Winter and am near a blazing fire, it is not this season that I am referring to exactly, though there must be some connection between this late-spring cool spell and another annual event, house-cleaning. Certainly there develops a domestic coolness along about this time that should have a name of its own. House-cleaning Winter is known and feared by all males of our species. It lasts longer than Dogwood Winter, or Linen-breeches Winter, or Blackberry Winter; it seems to me that it practically extends from the last snowdrift to the first katydid call.

But we modern folks are not alone in our fear of the annual disorder. Back at Fidelity it was much the same thing. Soap and water are pretty much alike, whether they are applied to a dirty-faced boy or a lot of grimy woodwork. And somehow spring smells are capable of stretching across the years. We used to use corrosive sublimate in the places where certain small biting varmints might snuggle in the bedsteads; some of these modern sprays smell equally bad, and I hope that they kill the moths and all their tribe. So far as I know, there never was a bedbug in our home at Fidelity, but we took no chances: every spring we took down all the beds and ran a turkey feather wet with poison into all the joints. It would have been a brave insect that would have dared to visit at our house. Old-fashioned lye soap is a good cleanser, too, but it has its smell. When something has been washed with soft soap, the odor of cleanliness or sterility is around for days. And paints and varnishes smell much as they used to, even though nobody covers up the whole creation with them as we used to. On the mantel to my right as I sit at my typewriter stands my old Seth Thomas clock, shining in its own native mixture of beautiful woods, thanks to the

geological strata of paints and varnishes that covered it over all my childhood; a skillful refinisher removed the layers of paint and varnish and revealed the natural beauty that time had covered up with more fashionable varnish. And I can still smell wall paper paste, such as we used in quantity every spring to dress up a room or two and to cover a fire screen or an otherwise unattractive clothes chest. Trade names change, but the basic work of soap and water and paint and paste goes on.

Now that connection with family harmony that House-cleaning Winter brings! I scan the items in our city paper to see what charges are brought by the offended member of a family now breaking up. "Cruel and inhuman treatment," "incompatibility," "non-support," and on and on go the ugly words; but no one has yet dared to put "house-cleaning" as a real reason. If I were given some free time, I would trot down to the divorce courts and question, privately, the disconcerted ones to see how much this annual stir-up may be conducive to matrimonial infelicity. (Excuse those big, high-sounding words, but, you see, the suggestion of a law court brought them to mind.) Since I have weathered forty-three house-cleanings, I am beginning to think that I am made of heroic stuff, that I will be able to last out two or three dozen more. Adjusting to house-cleaning puts iron into one's blood, very much as sudden need for protecting yourself squirts some adrenalin into your blood stream. Therefore, my fellow-countrymen, be faithful a few more weeks; live through the discomforts of spring house-cleaning; and maybe your families will remain unbroken at least until next Housecleaning Winter.

"YOU'LL NEVER RAISE THAT CHILD"

Recently a famous folklorist and I were discussing our rather puny selves as children. We did not know each other then or until lately, but each of us had had the same experience: visitors in our homes sometimes said to our mothers, in a slightly lowered voice: "You'll never raise that child." I cannot recall what my own mother said after this reassuring remark by a well-wisher, but I well remember the depressed feeling I had for a time afterwards. And maybe I decided to live anyway, to prove the bad judgment of the gossipy neighbor.

Puny children used to be quite common. Many of us had rickets, we were cradled in malaria, we were rarely without a cold, and our little bones almost stuck through our skins. Tonsils were bad because that was the way it was foreordained; adenoids served the sole purpose of making us talk through our noses and thus become sources of merriment for other children and grown people, too. And all the classic children's diseases just had to be lived through, as a mark of being human beings. Of course, we puny ones ate like starved animals, but no amount of food seemed to fill out our bony bodies. No wonder well-intentioned visitors felt that our life expectancy was short. The tragedy of my own memories is that far too often these wiseacres were right. Many of my playmates and acquaintances dies young, most often of tuberculosis. Some of the brightest boys and girls I have ever known were laid to rest in Fidelity Cemetery before they had attained to full-grown manhood and womanhood.

But some of us tough customers lived through it all and managed, in mature life, to get round and plump, and all this without eating half as much as we used to or adopting any sort of sedentary life, either. Just how we did it is beyond me; maybe there is a tough streak in even the puniest boy or girl. Maybe the way to get strong and plump is to be a starveling child, pitied by all those who have meat on their bones.

These free remarks about puny children were a part of a whole series of acts that should have had the attention of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Bodily infirmities, such as cross eyes, being tongue-tied, scars from injuries, often were kept in the foreground. Older people did not openly speak of these things often in the presence of children, but a little pitcher with wide ears was likely to hear himself discussed rather painfully whenever he stole into a group of parents and friends who did not know he was around. Other children, of course, never let you forget your infirmities and would call you by some nickname that told the story of your tragedy: "Bad Eye" was the name a younger friend of mine, held because one of his eyes was off center; "Moon-fixer" was the best name we could think to call the tallest girl in our country school. I sometimes wonder whether the saving of children's sayings to tell visitors was as funny as the family thought it. I was a sensitive little puny boy and somewhat resented having my idiotic sayings brought out every time some new relative came, but I was too small to raise any row about being the source of so much fun. Of course, it was meant in good spirit, I hope, but it hurt then and still hurts a little.

However, the meanest man I ever knew rejoiced in showing how well he had his children under his control by promising them something and then taking it away and cautioning them not to cry or object. On one occasion he called his small boy to come to the second table; the boy, probably starving as boys do, came running; the father, winking at one of the neighbors to show how obedient his boy could be, told the little fellow that he would have to wait until the next table. Some of the neighbors felt like lynching the man, and maybe they should have ridden him on a rail or given him a small dose of tar and feathers. I hope that such conduct is now remote from the average respectable home.

"SOME SIGNS OF THE TIMES"

This is the eleven-hundredth article in this column, and the column itself is near its twenty-first birthday. These rather dry facts have given me several thoughts about folklore and especially the attitude toward folk things at present as compared with sentiment twenty-one years ago.

As I have said several times in previous articles, I was looked at rather queerly when I first began these weekly discussions of ways we do things and left-overs in our lives of customs of distant origin. Some of my friends even wondered why I would parade my knowledge of such primitive things and even rejoice that I had experienced them. One said that if he had had such a primitive background, he would be ashamed to mention it. I told him I was not sacrificing truth to attract attention and would continue to tell the truth as I saw it. I am not sure whether he has ever been convinced of any value in folklore; I have not worried especially, for his opinion might not be too important, anyway.

On the other hand, from the very first article, back in 1935, many people of all ages and degrees of education have written me or called me or sought me out to thank me for telling the plain truth, not dressed-up truth, about quaint customs and people. I have tried to profit from these comments and stick, very religiously, to facts; dressing up facts is as contemptible as dressing them down, if those are good expressions. Our folk backgrounds were not things to be ashamed of and not things to use as platforms on which we might seek office or attention.

Suppose I did attend a one-room country school that was very primitive; so what? Where else could I have gone? Suppose that I do remember blackgum and hickory-bark toothbrushes; what other kinds were available then at Fidelity or elsewhere? Suppose I did grow up on wild greens and sassafras tea; can you think of finer food to grow up on? Fortunately, most of my correspondents have had the same experiences and are proud of them; they have egged me on by suggesting new articles on things that I had omitted or forgotten. Many of my pen friends have

regularly sent me lists of items that they wished I would incorporate into articles; I have obliged them as fast as I could find time to write. In many ways, I must confess, whatever success this column may have is due in no small part to my sympathetic readers.

In the years since this column began much use has been made of folk material, sometimes wisely, sometimes not. A much wider appreciation of folk customs is now evident, as we have changed some of our emphases in folk study. Many great scholars and many local interpreters of folk life have done much to make us know what values there are in our folk ways. But some people, even though they have known folklore at first hand, have distorted it to attract attention and dollars. If mere outsiders misinterpret our folk ways, that is at least excusable; but some of the worst distortions have been committed by insiders, who knew better but did not tell the truth about us and our ways. I sincerely hope that this attitude of dressing up our customs to make us appear as degenerates and primitive remnants of better times will die of its own weight since more genuine appraisers of folklore are appearing. Maybe it will not be a reproach to be called a Kentuckian, for people will know that we are, like Pop Eye, what we are and not some half-comic caricature of what some Easterner wants us to be. There is enough quaintness and fascination in our genuine ways to attract any one who honestly wants to know what folklore is really like; as in science, it is not necessary to be nature-fakers.

OUR HEROES

It has been a long time since pioneer days, at least in this part of the world, but we still like to make our heroes like those of pioneer days. We developed a host of ring-tailed roarers, half horse, half alligator men in those days and then let our imaginations lie fallow. It seems unbelievable that any of our later heroes could have had good homes, plenty to eat, and the respect of their neighbors. We love the log-cabin, rags-to-riches story so much that we cannot adjust to a world where some other than pioneer characteristics might be valuable.

For a lifetime I have been a college man, not bragging about it and not ashamed of it. But there is still some prejudice in some quarters against the college man, merely because he is a college man. The professional man is looked up to generally--the doctor, the lawyer, the other specialist--, but being just a college professor of some impractical subject like English or languages is a bit too much. Many people whom I know just will not believe that any such dreamer could possibly make a living and pay taxes like sensible, practical people. Of course, there are hosts of people who idealize the college teacher, too, who make him a sort of creature too good for this world; these rhapsodists are enemies of education and college life quite as much as the fellows who have made money in spite of not having an education and doubt whether there is anything to studying unless it increases one's immediate earning capacity. Why cannot college teachers be regarded as men, specialized in some ways, but human beings after all?

Also we still like to find our preachers who are self-ordained and fresh from the fields or woods. It is not at all uncommon to hear some well-to-do bench-warmer at a church lamenting the lack of fire and brimstone in the sermons of their new pastor, who is a student at a seminary or has already graduated. Lorenzo Dow died long ago, Sam Jones was still going strong when I could first remember, Billy Sunday was

stirring up things not too long ago. Each one attracted a lot of attention and helped fix a tradition of loud-talking, hair-tearing preaching. Some of the people today are surprised that a cultured, genteel man like Billy Graham can catch and hold the attention of hosts of people here and abroad; they probably long for the ripsnorting days when a preacher was a great counter attraction if and when a circus or Wild West show showed up. The patient, plodding average preacher today is one of our unrewarded heroes, always likely to be ignored when an arm-waving sensation comes along; but this is not as much a problem as it used to be. Maybe the tradition of the prize-fighting tactics of the old-time hell-fire exhorter is slowly giving way to a less sensational form of preaching.

The old-time doctor, picturesque though he was, is a long-past institution in most places. Even age has little to do with one's being an old-time doctor today: one of the dressiest country doctors I now know is past eighty, but is as active in keeping up with modern medicine as he is in being a good community leader. I have noticed that the young specialist, in spite of his charges, is sought so much that he cannot keep up with his practice; a fellow who hopes to cash in on the former glory of the family doctor, however valuable that old fellow was, had better think twice before adopting any outdated mannerisms, "tricks of the trade."

I wonder when we will insist on our politicians' having modern ways? Somehow their manners still cling to log-cabin, rags-to-riches days. That tradition seems too much alive to be ignored; the poor boy who had to walk six miles to a one-roomed country school is still an attractive fellow around election time. Just what would five or six miles have to do with the matter, anyway? But the sovereign voters love the old tradition and the old folk faith in heroes.

T+C

"WHAT'S THAT?"

One of my long-time friends and I are distressed about the younger generation in that they are not inquisitive enough about things that they do not know. In the days when we had only a few things to satisfy our mental hungers, we welcomed any new experiences; we even may have seemed a bit too inquisitive about things in general. Both of us were reared in an atmosphere of oral education, though both of us learned to read early and read extensively. We were close enough to folk days that much of our learning, both good and bad, was traditional rather than printed. What we knew about farming was told us or we acquired it by experience in the fields. When we did not understand, we asked questions, often with no hope of getting a satisfactory answer but to put our questions into form, to establish the fact that there were questions yet unanswered. I kept myself in hot water in my younger days by inquiring about the mysteries of things; sometimes I got some sensible answers, sometimes not. But I did not give up asking questions.

A few days ago, while camping in a national park, I went with the naturalist on his scheduled hike with visitors to the park. The naturalist is a very personable young man, widely acquainted with plant and animal life. He explained many a valuable fact about the things we saw and gave many occasions for people to ask questions. The group was well-bred and attentive, but you would have thought that not a one of them had ever wondered what any tree was or was for, what any bird or quadruped ate or said or did. Of course, the very fact that they went on the long hike showed that they wanted to learn something, but they did not know an oak from a dogwood and failed to recognize poison ivy after it had been pointed out and explained for the tenth time. There was no "So what?" expression from any of the men, women, or children, but I wish I could have, in my capacity as a teacher, given a test to

see what each one brought back from what to me, an experienced hiker of more than a half century of walking behind me, was one of the best guided trips I have ever been a part of.

When my grandchildren come to see me from across the continent, I find them still inquisitive, wanting to know what everything is, what it does, what it is good for. I hope that becoming adolescent and self-satisfied will not wholly destroy this native questioning. "Here is a rock, Granddaddy. What kind is it?" "What kind of a nest does a Hummingbird build?" "How did caves come to be?" And I tell all I know and am often caught short-handed. I enjoy being drained dry by the little fellows, especially since their questions have answers. Of course, some of my students still have this innate wanting to know, but far too many of them seem thoroughly satisfied with the little that they know. They have become specialists early and seem unable to find other fields interesting. In recent years only a mere handful of our students enroll for Ornithology; formerly so many came that it was hard to find a room big enough to hold them. The credit is the same that it was then; the inquisitiveness of the students has lessened. After all, will knowing interesting facts about nature help you buy a car more expensive than the other fellow's? Maybe this general hostility to questioning is a passing fad among young people, one that will be as outdated some day as detachable collars and cuffs are now. I wonder whether we have not lost much by losing the folk wanting to know, even though this attitude is called by such uncomplimentary names as nosiness or officiousness.

THE ROMANCE OF THE RIVER

Last Sunday I spent a short time at a very small place that used to be famous, for it was a boatlanding on Green River that once supplied the whole back country with trade. Now a single little store is all that is left of what was once was a prominent place. A few fishermen were arranging their lines for use in Green River, a few neighbors were sitting on the porch of the store, and my companion and I were on a snake-hunting expedition, probably looked upon as rather suspicious characters except by the few who knew us. In front on the store stretched Green River, as inviting as it had been on the several occasions when I had gone down or up on steamboats when such things were around. But no boat larger than a dugout was around in sight; only ghost boats plied the still waters of the green-watered stream. I could feel myself, in bright daylight, shivering with memories of other days when the river held a romance that could not be put into words; I shivered because I always do so when I contemplate ghosts of any kind.

When I lived near Fidelity, I could hear the whistles of many a steamboat as it went up or down Tennessee River; not to have heard my favorite boat's whistle would have meant that the CLYDE was unable to leave Paducah for its up-stream trip late in the week and Muscle Shoals for its return trip later. Sunday mornings were always associated with that boat whistle, even though it was full six miles, rough, rocky miles away. Other whistles did not make such an impression on my mind, but I always recognized this one, a sign that things were running as usual, that folks up the river would get their shipment of groceries from wholesale houses at Paducah, that many a load of freight would find its way to inland stores by way of returning wagons that had come to the river to bring a load of crossties. And for many a year after I came to life at Bowling Green, the boat whistles were as much a part of the coming and

going of time as the striking of the clock on the courthouse. A busy packet line down Barren River to Woodbury and on to Evansville brought to our town and to many a small landing most of what was required of food and clothing and materials that could not be grown in the fields or forests. I used to listen for the boats when I knew it was about the ~~time for them to be coming back from their 400-mile journey down the wind~~ time for them to be returning for their nearly four-hundred-mile round trip. I could tell by the sound whether the boat had got up as far as Madison's Landing or Thomas's Landing or, on some days, whether it was still far down toward Brown's Lock. On several occasions I was a passenger on some of these boats, actually on my way to places to visit or to speak or traveling for the sake of going somewhere. There is not a dull moment when one travels on a steamer through our winding, picturesque water courses. Neither river--the Barren or the Green--is wide enough to keep the trip from being a sort of triumphant journey by water through scenery that is reached even now in only a few places by roads. The whistle blew for some remote landing; down came someone to go to far-away Evansville on business, or someone drove down a flock of hogs to ship to market, away down the river. And sometimes, as we neared home or the other end of the line, the pilot "painted the lily and adorned the rose" by playing tunes on that same melodious whistle. It took skill and sometimes a little imagination, too, to do this, but the cliffs echoed with "Old Kentucky Home" and "Old Folks at Home" and once, at least, with "Marching Through Georgia." Nothing like those whistles has come along in a coon's age to bring back romance. The river is as it always was, the locks are still there, even better ones than there used to be; but the steamboat is gone; no wonder that I shivered when I took a look at the placid stream that knows the steamboat no more.

THE COAL ENGINE

Last week I shed a few very sincere tears for the steamboat and its musical whistle, passing institutions that I cannot help lamenting. Today I "feel moved," as a Quaker might say, to speak of another passing institution, the coal-burning engine on our railroad. A few days ago I read that there were only two coal engines still in use on the L. and N. system and that they were to be replaced soon; they may be gone before this article sees print. If they are gone then, this must be an epitaph in their memory. Peace to their ashes--I should say CINDERS.

I am well aware that the modern Diesel is much more effective and much cleaner, too, than the older engines were; I am also informed that cinders do not trouble the passengers as they once did. But what can take the romantic niche once occupied by the long train that came puffing down the track, trailing clouds of steam and smoke and cinders? And if the weather was bleak with winter and snow was everywhere, what more obvious illustration of man's conquering of nature was there than this same puffing, snorting monster that came through, showing that a little matter of snow and storm could not daunt man and his inventions? And what will there be to scare into fits the horses as we drive to town to lay in a supply of things that were not kept in stock at Fidelity stores? Excuse me, I sometimes forget that the horse disappeared long before the Diesel came into use.

When I went away from Fidelity to go to school or returned for a brief visit with my folks, it was a snorting, puffing, coal-burning engine that pulled the train I rode. Real fancy trains never got on our one railroad some ten miles from Fidelity; we knew only cinders through the open windows. But the very smell of the coal smoke and the choking sensation we felt from breathing too much of it meant travel, travel to places miles away, farther than a horse and buggy could have taken us in days and days. Why, I could leave Fidelity around noon,

take a late-afternoon N. C. and St. L. train south, change to the L. and N. at Paris, Tennessee, and be in Bowling Green at 10:18, the hour that had been used so much that nobody except railroad people knew the number of the train, but everybody knew the train itself. Chaucer's Canterbury pilgrims would have spent more than a week making that journey. And I wish that someone, a sort of modern Chaucer, could have felt the poetry of the old-fashioned dirty train trip and interpreted it for humanity before all memory of it is lost to history and romance.

A few days ago I met a young woman from a very small whistle stop on that same L. and N. Railroad that I used to ride so often. The mention of the place caused me to start saying stations as they were along that line, making the young woman think I had suddenly advanced far into senility. But every name suggested a dozen or two stops at those same little places to leave some mail bags and empty milk cans and a passenger or two and to pick up other milk cans and bags of mail and passengers for remote places down the line, forty or fifty miles away. And along the way we would go through the first tunnel I ever saw and catch views of the winding Cumberland River and see great areas of timber that had formerly belonged to a great iron company. And at every small stop there would be bustle and commotion because the train had come in, bringing its daily supply of human necessities and also a batch of newspapers that would tell of places very far away. But what is that sort of train today? Right here I heard a Diesel whistle, a very melodious whistle, signaling the coming into town of The Pan-American, air-conditioned and fast-running, but I cannot forget the puff, puff, puff of the coal-burners and the stops at the small places as well as the larger ones. You may talk about the cinders and the heat; let me remember the over-the-hills-and-far-away feeling that the smell and sight of the coal smoke belching from the engine brought and bring to one to does not deny remembering away back.

SPONGES

Today I want to talk about sponges, not the variety that grow in salt water but the human kind. They seem to have been very well known in classic times, as they appear as stock characters in Greek and Roman plays, away back before the Christian era. And, judging by the conversation of these same stage sponges, they were not at all embarrassed to be around handy when mealtime came or when some cast-off clothing might be given away. "Hangers-on" have existed in all phases of society: they are like the "little fleas that have smaller fleas" made so famous in rhyme.

I suppose that sponges are still around, but I do not have as much opportunity to know them personally as I did when they made our house their free hotel. Many of them somehow arrived for my father, the doctor, at a time when it would have seemed rude not to stay when invited to dinner. Others that I knew somehow got pretty close to somebody who had dinner on the ground at Sulphur Springs just in time to share barbecued sheep or fresh beef or some such good eating. I can recall when my sister quite casually once asked a girl at Sunday School to go home with her for dinner; "I was a-fixing to" was the rather odd reply. I suppose that the visitor must have held my sister with her glittering eye as the Ancient Mariner held the Wedding Guest.

Every day when I go to school, I see one of my former students who kept up this ancient tradition of being constantly in debt to some easy lender. He had, of old, a very suave manner; he still has it, though it has somewhat hardened now and apparently does not secure solid returns as it once did. Maybe his smile was worth the ten-dollar loans that he used to secure and fail to return. A famous English essayist has said that the sponge apparently believes that his good will is worth the small sums that he conveniently fails to pay back.

Once, when I was teaching a country school, I ran into a good illustration of how to treat a sponger. My landlord was a brother-in-law of the world's worst borrower-and-failer-to-return. The big iron kettle, so useful at hog-killing time, stayed most of the time at the brother-in-law's; finally my landlord presented the kettle to his borrowing relative; and the relative kept it but did not ask to borrow the big kettle's successor, at least as long as I was around.

Neighborliness, as I have so often said, is one of our best virtues. It is a half-and-half affair, though, and must be worked at. When I think of the people who had the best name for neighborliness, I cannot forget that they were always on the credit of the ledger, partly because they usually had more things to lend but partly because they used their own equipment or managed to do without.

Ages ago I was the proud owner of a handsome set of Shakespeare's plays that I had bought when I was in college. A student, who has since then become wealthy and was not dog-poor then, asked to borrow one of the volumes of my Shakespeare until his copy came. I actually got the handsome book back, but it had to be ~~taped~~ mended up with adhesive tape to keep the backs on. Every time I look at that book, I wonder at the nonchalant air the student had when he returned my valuable book, with not a word about the backs being almost too loose to stay on. The companion volumes, with nearly a half century of use, are still far from being as decrepit as the Comedies book was when it came back after a ten-week term. But I can boast that it came back, which is more than I can say for many an armload of books that were borrowed and lent in good faith and are still wandering, like the wandering boy tonight that we used to sing about.

Maybe I do not know sponges as well as I once did because I am a little older and not quite so easy a victim. It did not take any extra explaining on the part of my Latin teacher when I met in Plautus a character whose name should be translated best as Sponge.

"YEA, YEA AND NAY, NAY"

In my half century of observing folk language I have often been impressed with changing styles of asserting or thanking or denying. The neighbors at Fidelity wasted very few words when they admitted a thing was true or untrue; they said yes and no so flatly that there was nothing else to be asked; an outsider would have thought that they were not wholly happy in answering anyway. We on the inside of the community knew that this flatness of speech was genuine, unadorned, unquestioned. Why waste a whole lot of words to say yes or now? No amount of talking could make a thing true when it wasn't ; we became suspicious of anyone who used a roundabout way of saying anything so obvious as yes or no. We had never seen a Quaker; only a few had ever heard of one; but we had at least this Quaker attribute: we said what we said and left it at that.

The Quakers used to make a sort of religious test of this same answering questions. They took the Bible literally and felt that saying more or less than yea and nay was wicked or evasive or even suspicious. When they were ridiculed for this blunt way of speaking, they stuck to their Biblical monosyllables until society ultimately gave in and allowed them that privilege, just as they do not have to swear today but can assert or use some other term, for they literally avoid the word swear: "Swear not at all," etc.

Thanking someone for a favor has gone through many evolutions, at Fidelity and elsewhere. Most often we said "Much obliged," and stopped at that. Some of us said "Thank you," but that was less common. If we failed to understand, we asked over, of course. We did not say, "I beg your pardon" or "Sorry." We said, "What

did you say?" in full, for "What?" was considered very rude and might bring swift justice at school or at home. If we were talking to a woman and did not understand, we said, "Ma'm?" in a questioning tone of voice; we asked a man to repeat by saying, "Sir?" I find both of these still in use among my students, particularly the older ones or students whose parents are sticklers for good manners. Mother used to point out rude brats to us who would actually say "What?" to grown folks. They were nearly always of a lower social order in our little world.

Similarly, we put "Sir" or "Ma'm" on "Yes" and "No." Not to have done so would always have caused trouble. As I said many years back, I saw a good-sized little girl get a sound thrashing because she refused to say "Yes, ma'm" to her teacher. That style has gone and come and is going again right now, though wars and rumors of wars have brought back polite forms of address from time to time.

In our democratic world of this century it seems foolish and wasteful to have to add titles to plain words, as if we were still following the French and their endless "monsieurs" and "madames" and "mademoiselles." With all our pretense in other times of our hatred of titles and honors, we were always generous with our "generals" and "colonels" and "judges." A very elderly old man of my acquaintance rarely spoke to anyone whom he regarded as worthy of address without attaching some honory title; I suspect that he liked to be called one in return. When he referred to a workman on his place, that was always "my man Jones," or some such ancient way of putting hewers of wood and drawers of water in their places. And this same elderly would-be aristocrat could not have been induced to say anything in as few words as possible; that would have put him in the class with his man, his tenant, and other such poor white trash.

WILL ANTIQUE LANGUAGE RETURN?

Many a modern who buys at a stiff price some bit of antique furniture or cloth or glass would probably have a stroke if I suggested a return to some of the antique ways we used to say things. I am not making any such suggestion, however, for the ways of people are past finding out. I am not ready myself to go back to English as she was spoke. But suppose we take a look at some of the antiques we might readopt, without going very far afield, either.

Not many weeks ago a perfectly good and honest man told me how he holp his neighbor clear a newground. He was using the very words of Chaucer: "That hem have holpen whan that they were seeke." A great many of my Fidelity friends used this old form regularly, though some of us smiled behind our hands when we heard this quaint old word and associated it only with people considerably below us intellectually and socially. Helped seems to have won out in the race; it is hardly likely that our children's will say that they holp anybody.

For ages our language referred to an object or thing as hit. We had inherited that word, along with he and him and his. It was neither odd nor quaint; everybody, high and low, said it. Maybe it was our English tendency to make h's silent that led to the dropping of that initial h, though we kept it in other words. Of course, the word hit got mixed up with social customs and was branded as the usage of primitive or ignorant people. And society prevailed; if a respectable public man said hit today, we would accuse him of being a bad citizen; he would probably have to defend himself against wife beating and general cussedness.

One of the finest women I ever knew, one with a pretty good education in pre-Civil War days when she was young, regularly said clumb for the past tense of climb. Again we proper ones who had studied Harvey's GRAMMAR at the country school laughed privately about the old-fashioned pronunciation, little knowing that the funny word had formerly been the correct one and that there was a time when climbed was as incorrect as knowed was and is. "In our simple ignorance," in Emerson's phrase, we laughed wrongly, as so many of us do when we do not understand. Climbed prevailed; clumb went the way of hit and holp. It was neither better nor worse than the new word; it merely was not accepted by the right people. Like the old Ford car joke, which said that a Ford car could take you anywhere except into good society!

The words that I wish most to have a good social standing did not originate in Old English but came in later, when they were needed: hisn, hern, ourn, theirn. In the oldest phase of our language my and thy did not exist; the words were mine and thine, just as the corresponding words still are in German. But these words soon developed two uses: in one use the n was left; in the other, it was lost: "my book," "The book is mine." This predicate use of mine gave rise to the words cited above. It became customary, in the 1300's, to say "his book," "The book is hisn." That is downright useful and should have been kept, along with some of the homely translations of Wyclif, where it and the other taboo words appear. Nothing so expressive has yet appeared in our pronouns, but society ruthlessly turned thumbs down on the words, and it would take a braver man than I am to resurrect them. Would you be willing to form with me an antique-word club and set up shop? Nay, verily.
~~vǝrily.~~

EXCURSIONS

As I write this essay, it is hot summer time, with 90-degree temperature; and that reminds me of other hot summers when excursions would have been occurring on just such days. In my part of the world it might have been a train excursion to Mammoth Cave: up to what was then called Glasgow Junction(now Park City) and over the hills on the picturesque Mammoth Cave Railroad, now long dead. At the cave itself we would doff our dress-up clothes and don cave attire, funny enough in appearance to make the bats and cave rats laugh. But we would have souvenirs to show our envious friends that we had been on an excursion, especially if the friends had not. Or it might be a steamboat excursion on Barren and Green Rivers, with the thrills of going through a lock, of floating down a stream so narrow that the boat seemed almost a bridge between the two banks. There would be singing and eating and joke-playing and love-making, too. And, if the boat came back home late at night, we would sit on deck and watch the headlights play over the rugged scenery. ~~around the small bends.~~ But excursions were just everywhere in those days, some of them to far-away places at very cheap rates, so cheap that even poor people could afford to go sometimes. In spite of impossible hours for the excursions to leave or return, it was possible to work up several in a single season. Just about every railroad had a special excursion agent, who was wily of speech and able to convince you that only a trip on his line would bring you happiness in any single season.

How strange this sounds now! This morning I put my wife on a train at an early hour for a visit to our daughter, in Oregon. One other person boarded the same train, which was largely a string of mail and express coaches. The train was an important one, but it runs merely through unromantic country like the Middle West and the South. The trains to the Far West are something else, for it was necessary days ago

for my wife to get reservations out of Chicago. Excursions are still here, but they involve more distance and more money. They are like what my friend said about his new car: he got more miles out of it than out of his old car, and it also cost more to do so. But the excursion of shorter nature seems to be about as dead as luxurious steamboats on our rivers; busses and private cars have taken over. More people are going somewhere than ever before, but a large percentage of them are driving their own cars.

Not too many years ago it was a rare person who could expect a two-week vacation with pay. What vacation he had was not on the house; he might manage to get away for a few days to visit relatives and friends who did not live too far away. The family vacation in the family car is now a tradition among us that seems as firmly fixed as was the former custom of driving across the county on Saturday to spend the weekend with somebody. What will be the custom next I do not know, but it will probably be as much used as the one we now have.

There used to a time when the front room was a museum of places visited on excursions. One of our friends at Fidelity had been to Chicago to the 1893 World's Fair. His house was cluttered up with stuff that he had brought back to show the ones who stayed at home. We untraveled ones looked at these souvenirs with saucer eyes and secretly planned to outdo our rich neighbors, that is, when and if we ever had any money to spend in travel. And we, too, later bought foolish little souvenirs or kept things that were given to us and put them in our front rooms to show still others that had not been about. The excursions, thus, became neighborhood affairs, educative or provocative of envy. I wonder whether the millions who now go hither and yon pick up as much junk as we used to, or whether that may have passed as a fancy, much as has passed the excursion that we once knew.

THE FANCY SPEAKER

Last week I sat through a thirty-minute boring speech. I would have been bored past endurance but for the review that I got of a whole era of speaking that I have lived through. Let me go back some forty to fifty years. We used to have Teachers Institutes every late summer or early fall. Many of the lecturers who came were good speakers and brought us some solid intellectual food; others were mere word-slingers who did not average one thought in an hour ramble. One such rambler was Professor Snip, let us call him; that name fits, for what he had to say was snippy, smart-alec, shallow, would-be funny. I suppose that he must have been regarded as cute in earlier days than mine, but he was boring beyond words. He had a way of getting institutes readily and of boring them much as he bored me. Since I heard him through all or parts of six or seven, I should be able to put on a whole show of his shallow stunts, his outclassed data, his opinionated ~~[illegible]~~ program. The recent speaker was enough like him to have been his younger brother. His speech had evidently been given so many times that it rattled off like the player piano that used to be turned loose across the street from where I lived. He would get so enraptured with his wit and humor that he would forget that people were supposed to be listening; some of his wisest wise cracks fell pretty flat; the loud speaker did not pick up the fine points that were uttered in a simulated whisper. He had alliteration by the yard, he found fancied resemblances between words that are rank strangers, he quoted shallow rhymes and shallower morals until I wondered whether he would ever quit. And the look of satisfaction on his fairly handsome old face made me know that he felt quite proud of himself as he ran off, like a record, his

carefully memorized stream of inanities.

Several of us who heard him laughed, not at his jokes and puns and alliterations, but at the memory of a time when he would have appeared riproriously funny. If he had come to our chapel at Western almost a half century ago, he would have been regarded as one of the world's greatest speakers. Chautauqua was at its height then, with a good dozen like him to be obtained every year. Many of the speakers were our very best products in sociology, politics, history, literature; but there was nearly always one like the man I so recently heard. I did not realize that tastes had changed from those earlier days until about 1924, when some friends of ours in another state invited my wife and me to attend a chautauqua lecture in a tent near their home. We went. The lecturer was a word-slinger, eminently shallow, a phrase-maker. I sat and wondered why I was not having a great time, though I did have the good taste not to say anything like this to our hosts. In fact, this is the first time I have cheeped about the program. But the wonderful chautauqua seemed to have been fatally wounded that day. I was never again as eager to tell how I used to attend the programs in the hottest possible summer weather and come away dancing on air. Years of thinking, however, have made me remember that I did see and hear some excellent things besides these wordy speeches. I first saw the great Philip Ben Greet, long before he was knighted, in a hot tent; and that was my first Shapeapearean play, too. I heard a reading of Israel Zangwill's "THE MELTING POT in that same tent. Those two events were good enough to balance scores of wordy speeches, full of glittering generalities and literary deadwood. Maybe the coming of the dull speaker recently did me a service, and my friends, too, by recreating for us a time when we did not recognize the difference between a word-slinger and an excellent speaker.

T + C

G. A. R.

With the death in the summer of 1956 of Albert Woolson, the Grand Army of the Republic came to an end; a whole era in American history stopped abruptly. By the time this article reaches the newspapers, it is perfectly possible that any one or all of the three very aged Confederates who survived Mr. Woolson may have joined their late enemy.

I recall the first time that the Confederate soldier as a passing institution gave me a shiver of sadness at the passing of time. I was standing in the front yard of Jefferson Davis's old home at Beauvoir, Mississippi, talking to one of the "old" boys who wore the gray." By Davis's will his property was left as a home for Confederate veterans. For many years only the very poor or the infirm had used it, but by 1927, the time I speak of, any old fellow or his widow could come and stay as long as anybody wished. Because the estate has a frontage on the Gulf of Mexico, many old fellows loved to spend the winter there and then visit up-state relatives in the summer. It was early autumn; many of the oldsters were coming back for the winter. A hale old man, who said that he was a mere eighty-nine, remarked sadly that, when he returned from a summer with his children in northern Mississippi, he had found more than eighty of his comrades gone. And that was nearly thirty years ago! Time has worked fast since then, so fast that of even thousands alive then only three remain.

When I try to tell my students that, in my childhood, Civil War soldiers were as common a sight in any gathering as World War I soldiers today, they look at me as if I, too, were already becoming ancient and shaky in my mind. But think of it: in the early nineties, when my memories begin, these soldiers had been mustered out less than thirty years! Many of them were still in the early fifties; some were even

under fifty. They were the mature, sometimes middle-aged, men of our time and place. Some bore to a very ripe old age a badly-scarred body as proof of their harrowing experiences. My two uncles, too, lived to advanced ages, unscarred and cheerful, even unprejudiced; they never swore or ranted about the war; it was over; they came back; that was that. Even the way they pronounced the word "Yankee" had no bitterness about it; they called themselves "Rebels," as my own mother did to her dying day. The two terms were no more bitter than the names of two adjoining counties; they were Yankees and Rebels, so what?

Four years ago, as I have previously said in this column, even a well-educated and cultured bus driver on a fast express bus between Omaha and Chicago, I believe, did not know why the great national highway was called G. A. R. HIGHWAY. Somebody asked him what the initials meant; he said they stood for some military organization, he believed.

Some of my students, born when relicts of the Civil War were very scarce, sometimes remark that their ancestors fought in the Civil War under George Washington or marched to the sea with Andrew Jackson. History itself is getting a bit vague. One such student, whom I tried to straighten out as to dates and people, said that they were all dead anyway, and he was glad the whole thing was over. Some years back, many of you will remember, there was a radio program when the remaining boys of gray and blue talked to each other, with all the nation listening. Each one said practically the same thing as my student: "It's over; aren't you glad?" Each one wished he might know the other, in peaceful times, in a country hallowed by the blood of youths of both sides, each hoping that his effort or his life might establish the ideals that were American. ~~on both sides.~~ In the hour of death little things like sectional differences seem pretty small, I suspect. A great army of brave boys, like us and still a long time ago they lived, now have gone from us, leaving us a bit puzzled as to how and why they wanted so badly to kill each other, such lovable youths, so much alike.

EXIT THE CIRCUS

The newspapers in 1956 have had plenty of items to arrest the attention. The last Federal soldier died; political conventions took big headlines; and Ringling Brothers as a traveling circus passed into the Limbo of Things that Were. Maybe the passing of the circus seems a small thing as compared with national political conventions; maybe the death of an old soldier, the last of his kind, merits more attention; but somehow many a heart beat a more audible tattoo when the circus passed away than when these big events took place.

Long ago Ringling Brothers had acquired the show that P. T. Barnum had organized and made famous. From all I have heard from old-timers and from what I have read in a lifetime of interest in Barnum, he was the circus director par excellence. He was reputed to have said that a fool is born every minute and that everybody, in present-day parlance, loved to be gypped. Long before the days of our tourist traps, without which no famous place would be recognizable today, Barnum and the other circus promoters gave people what they wanted. If it was an ancient ex-slave, who pretended to remember things that happened before the Revolution, so much the better. If it was a genuine mermaid, here she was, big as life. And even Jenny Lynd, the "Swedish nightingale," as our poetic forebears called her, was a Barnum attraction for a time, starting a tradition that has by no means died yet. When she stopped at Mammoth Cave, she must sing "The Last Rose of Summer"; where she slept en route to Nashville is appropriately marked today, like so many other places where some famous person stopped to refresh himself. Barnumn, you see, had many irons in the fire, his circus being only one of them. In New York he could draw a crowd for years on end; on the road his portable circus made its way into even remote places, bringing clowns, acrobats, trained horses, and a menagerie that gave many a country person his first authentic view of what was a commonplace to Noah, animals from

the jungle and from the cold north, elephants and camels and lions and all the rest, a memorable company of animated nature. And trick riders and ~~sword~~ sword-swallowers and naughty dancing girls and stage-coaches to be robbed by outlaws or Indians, fresh from the plains! Pretty soon I might imagine myself Walt Whitman, with all these enumerations, but every one of them makes my mouth water, for it was the circus that broke through our narrow isolation and gave us a view of romance and danger and far away and long ago.

Since animal shows were known to the ancient Romans, I wonder whether some of the flavor of the circus may not have been handed down untouched since that long-ago time. Imagine a Roman in brilliant toga, whip in hand, commanding an African lion to do his stuff for other Romans in togas! Imagine a slender Egyptian or Parthian or Persian girl walking a tight rope, to the plaudits of the cheering throng! And I wonder, before the discovery of America, what was sold in the place of popcorn. Were there balloons and pink lemonade and walking sticks and similar things in ancient Rome? What would be the equivalent of the high-sounding talk of the ring master? What designs were painted on the faces of the clowns? And what would you call corny jokes in Latin? Oliver Wendell Holmes imagines Cicero's famous essay on old age as really an address at the circus and gives an imaginary cub reporter's account, somewhat irrelevant, of the old codger's statements. I wish I could find, in good Latin, an account of the standardized talk at a circus or an animal act. Remember, that sort of thing was taken very seriously in those days; drivers or riders or other performers had their deeds chiseled on stone for permanent gravestones; many of these same boasting stones survive. It might be ~~on fair~~ worthwhile to posterity to erect a big stone to Barnum and Bailey and Hagenbeck and Ringling and their tribe and tell, as unblushingly as did the Roman gravestones for circus performers, the mighty deeds of men who kept alive until our time the thrills and delights of classic Rome.

THE CONVENTIONS OF 1956

Many of us made a pause in the day's occupations to listen or look at the two great political conventions that enlivened the whole country in August, 1956. Television is still new enough that hosts of people strained their eyes to see the great faces, feeling that they had almost had a speaking acquaintance with the men who run the affairs of our time. And even radio is not too old for some of us to recall that it was only 1928 when a national convention was first broadcast, by means of the new gadget called a radio. Al Smith's speech soon was on everybody's lips, his New York pronunciation and all. When the famous 1896 convention, in which Bryan raised so many hopes and used such high-sounding prose, came around, we had to wait--we at Fidelity--until our weekly paper arrived before we knew about a Crown of Thorns and a Cross of Gold. Now we can see the man in action as he says what may or may not become a slogan. For better or for worse," a phrase used pretty solemnly elsewhere, the two conventions of this year are over and are a part of history, even though they may seem, with our modern inventions, less glamorous than the famous ones when we were very young.

To an old-timer like me, a sort of innocent bystander in politics and many other things, the comic aspects of conventions, now and formerly, loom pretty large. There does not seem to be a great deal of difference between the great national parties and our pathetic little politicking in Fidelity, just before and just after 1900, the period when I I was closest to politics that I have ever been. At Fidelity we heard just one side, the only side we supposed that there could be in an honest world, the Democrats. We lived through the defeat of the South, the mistakes of all the Presidents afterwards, except, of course, Grover Cleveland; and we were advised, for the nth time, that all would be lost

if our Democratic candidate lost. Some of our speakers were as emotional as our preachers or testifying neighbors at a love-feast at Sulphur Springs Church. They wanted us to believe that they had all but given their lives for the cause, and the more often they had run for something or other, the louder they were in their declaration of their readiness to sacrifice themselves for the good of us all. We whooped it up in the approved fashion, we felt that we would be honored to lick a few Republicans and Yankees, if they were not the same thing; we knew that our cause was just and that the right would ultimately win. And then came election after election when our men lost: 1896, 1900, 1904, 1908. Surely there was no justice in the whole universe. But along about election time we again faced the likelihood that the unmentionable ones in office would be turned out by some sort of divine justice and that our candidates, the lily-white, simon-pure ones, would be named to rule over us. Somehow our memories got pretty hazy each Presidential election and failed to remind us that we had not gone as far toward destruction as our favorites told us would happen if they lost.

Isn't Fidelity funny? We were a lot of ignorant, untraveled boobs, living miles from a railroad, out in the sticks. We were narrow, conceited, pathetically loyal to our party and our fathers' party; we knew, within our very bones, that there was only one way out, our way. And a visitor from another planet would have laughed, or done what is the equivalent of laughing, for such strange creatures, at our narrowness, our lack of comprehension of the big world of which we were so small a part. Wait a minute! What am I saying? Was it Fidelity that was being so pitied for its narrowness, its remoteness from world ideas? Sometimes I feel inclined to move back to Fidelity, not the one I knew fifty years ago, but some similar place where people have not had an idea since Lee surrendered. I cannot see that we of that remote time and place differed very much from the great and the little, the rich and the poor, the illiterate and the educated who put on our 1956 shows, as if to make up for the passing of the circus of other times.

"AIN'T YOUSE GOT NO LAKES?"

The summer vacation of 1956 brought some delightful camping for me in the Great Smokies, in the Pisgah National Forest, and at Mt. Mitchell and along the Blue Ridge Parkway. Everywhere I camped there were many other people, from just about everywhere in America. My next-door neighbor at one place was from Florida; at another, from Massachusetts; at another, from Ohio. All of us, regardless of our place of residence, were enjoying the coolness and scenery of high mountains. I told a Massachusetts family my experience in Michigan some twenty-five years ago, when our next-door neighbor woman at camp asked me: "Ain't youse got no lakes in Kentucky?" I mentioned how wonderful the mountains of New England are and how much I would like to share them again. I was talking to the right people, for they knew their own scenic mountains and were eager to see others, in other parts of America. Right there I got a glimpse of what travel is doing for us Americans. Hosts of us are learning what is around the corner; I know of no group of people who are getting any nearer to reality, as it appears everywhere, than campers. Some of my camping friends had come well equipped, with hundreds of dollars worth of equipment. They were in no sense unable to stay at even expensive places. They chose, rather, to see mountains and woods and other things up close, to live with them. In winter, if they wanted to travel, they could stay in hotels or motels and wear fashionable clothing; but for summer they loved to don rough clothing, cook on a fire, eat on a crude table, and sleep in a tent. The fine fellowship on the camping places is among the finest experiences I have ever had. I have camped, within recent years, in many national and state parks, in national forests, in trailer courts, in privately-owned tourist places. Within a few minutes I would be acquainted with many of the others who were sharing the experiences of being outside. Since I have sometimes been without a camping partner, people have gone out of their way to

be nice to the fat old man who was without any one to talk to. I have found that a very large percentage of the people in such places are well educated, have traveled widely, and are just as eager as I to know more and more about our wonderful country. Clergymen, teachers, naturalists, photographers--these constitute a large percentage of such campers. A pair of field glasses around my neck almost at once made friends for me. These people know an ornithologist when they see one; they are not suspicious of him, fearing that he is looking for a still. The children of such campers are just what you would guess: eager to hike, watchful of new things, talkative and approachable. It really makes a fellow proud to be a part of a country where a good-sized group--a very rapidly-growing group--know how to camp out and enjoy it.

There are so many phases of our complex life that we often imagine that the wide distances of our land might make us queer and different. But, thanks to modern ways of travel and radio, ~~and~~ television, and the press, most of us have a broad foundation of common culture and common interests. People who camp out are largely family people, with boys and girls who will soon be entering school again. Most of the children, and some of the parents, have grown up in the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, in 4-H Club and F. F. A. and F. H. A. They have learned from childhood the very essence of camp life and enjoy it. These childhood experiences are building for us a generation who will more and more love the rough and tough experiences of touring America rather inexpensively but at the same time very intimately, seeing things that the ones who are fearful of getting themselves slightly dirty will never see and will never know. Occasionally some people who have become enamored of houses smile rather condescendingly at us rough-dressed campers, but none of us would change places with even the most arrogant of them. We feel, and rightly so, I think, that the ones to be envied are those of us who dare to rough it and work in a few days or weeks of primitive living to balance the long days and weeks that we must spend indoors.

A QUART OF KEROSENE

In the summer of 1956 my wife asked me to get her a quart of kerosene for some cleaning she wanted to do. Away I went, still conscious of how easy such a task would have been a few years ago. Presently I began to doubt my success. I asked for kerosene at two garages, a neighborhood grocery, a chain grocery, and finally anotheer garage before I could find a dime's worth of coal-oil. At several of the places the proprietor and I would compare notes on the amount of coal-oil the stores once sold and the very rapid change in recent years. One told me that, in another Kentucky town where he had run a chain store, he kept 500 gallons of kerosene on hand regularly and was forever having to restock. But our time has changed right under our noses.

Now here I am, not worn out with age, not a rival of Methuselah, who can recall having visited in at least one home where tallow candles, home-made, were the sole source of light; I grew up with coal-oil lamps as the highest form of illumination that any of us knew. My memories are of swinging lamps in parlors, of soft-toned shades on some of the lamps in such elegant places, of homely and useful lamps on the dining table and wherever the family gathered to read. Even at church the soft light from the lamps suspended from the ceiling or along the walls must have been that "dim religious light" that Milton talks about. And think of the old family lantern and the small circle of light that it made in a very dark world. For a very large part of my life, now past three score, this situation remained in most rural areas. Just recently the R. E. A. lines have penetrated the remotest places, so that coal-oil and its various uses may be forgotten as soon as we have forgotten many another phase of our lives.

In the summer I visited several old water mills, reworked and set to grind corn meal, like that on which so many of us were raised. One of the millers and I told a group of people fully as old as we but less

fortunate in having seen civilization grow, how important the old mills used to be, not only as grinders of corn meal but as sawmills and flour mills and cotton gins. The group were respectful but somewhat unconvinced. I am sure that most of the middle-aged men and women wondered why the people we had known did not go to the supermarket and get a bag of corn meal or to the building-supplies market and buy whatever planks and such like were needed. These same people may be skeptical about the source of milk soon, and wonder why it is necessary to have cows.

However, I do feel a pride in many of my younger contemporaries for their efforts to learn how our primitive civilization, often shut in by distance or rivers or mountains from most of the big world, managed to survive, to provide some of the luxuries of our lives and all of the necessities. This visible way of showing some of the folk arts by which our ancestors lived is one of the commendable phases of many of our parks and other show places. Many years ago in this column I mentioned Skansen, a show place in Sweden where every type of house and industry of the folk was and still is illustrated. I wished then for something like that in our own land before we become so standardized that we are all alike. Slowly some such ideas are taking form, so that within another decade or two we may be able to rival any foreign country in our living pictures of life as it was once lived. The popularity of these old-time transcripts of life shows that people who run tourist traps as well as serious-minded seekers after good folk representations are working in the right direction and will surely be able to have a reward, monetary or one of satisfaction at the interest in our folk origins, or our folk industries, or our folk inventiveness.

"WHAT WERE THEY LIKE?"

In my teaching of American literature I try very hard to get my students to see what our ancestors were like. As time goes by, that becomes a harder and harder job, for we are losing rapidly many of the evidences that our ancestors were alive like us and that their ways of life were not as different as they sound in books. One of the poems in which the author has tried to place the Pilgrims as people very much alive is Longfellow's "The Courtship of Miles Standish." The poet, and most of his contemporaries, had come to regard all the Pilgrims as plaster saints, as people all-good, all-wise. With the advantage of being a descendant of John Alden and Priscilla, Longfellow tried to present their romance in the strange new world as humanly as possible. I am sure that many of the staid New Englanders were somewhat shocked by this frank treatment of people who had died long, long ago. This very effort on the part of the poet, however, makes the poem one of his best, one of the most unified poems in our literature. Though lacking in the dream-world phantasy of "Evangeline," a poem that is full of heartbreaks, it seems to deal with people who were strangely like us. Miles Standish and his hot temper, Priscilla and her rather modern attitude toward John ("Why don't you speak for yourself,John?"), and Alden the lover, young and romantic in spite of the long, hard winter and its devastating plague--we almost feel as if we had been there. In general, however, poets and many historians leave us feeling that earlier generations were so far removed from us that we are of another race; some even make us feel that we are degenerate sons and daughters of a heroic race that will never again rise to such heights.

A strong sense for history soon makes any of us realize that our ancestors were almost comically like us. Discounting the slogans of the time, the religious or social or political or economic ideas that were fashionable, we soon find that Great-grandpa was a likeable chap,

a bit too high-tempered in his attitudes toward some of our sacred cows, a bull-headed fellow who was not afraid, in dangerous times, to say his say. He did not have many of earthly possessions, he did not have much formal education, he cut a rather small figure in society, but he had a local reputation for rugged honesty, for plain-spokenness, for tolerance in times when it was unfashionable to be tolerant. He seemed a very plain man, almost negligible in his day; but somehow his small stature, physical and social, grows as the years pass by. To stand for what he believed was right when it was dangerous to express an opinion, to use no tact in saying what he thought, to dare his neighbors of another faith in politics and religion to do anything about it--my, that was no easy task for anybody, especially a back-country man who was expected to agree with his betters. Who persecuted him? Who wished him dead but lacked the nerve to kill him? Who lost no opportunity to belittle him? They and he are alike dead, most of them buried in some remote family or neighborhood graveyard in unmarked graves; but there is a satisfaction in knowing that the old fellow fought a good fight and kept the faith, in spite of dangers that would have daunted a bigger or younger man.

Unfortunately, the few surviving tintypes of the old man show him as a dour-looking Scotchman, certainly not handsome, not photogenic by anybody's standards, a rugged, knotty little man, bewhiskered and with unruly hair, like so many of his descendants. His strange dress, his rugged face and head, and his stiffness in the old tintype make him seem a very inconsequential fellow. Most of us would pass him by if we met him on the street, just as probably many a contemporary did. But people of all kinds--descendants of his former friends and his former enemies--still know his name, still tell of his dare-devil championing what he believed to be right. Ten years older than Abraham Lincoln, he lived to within a year of my birth. I wish he could have lived long enough for me to see him and know him. Somehow, the greatest compliment I have ever had is that I seem, three generations later, to be most like him of all his numerous descendants, even though many of the older people who knew him add, "He was the ugliest man in Calloway County."

"BARKING UP THE WRONG TREE"

A few minutes ago I laid down a book I was reading, in the main a very fascinating book, for it is a series of honest-to-goodness pictures of simple life in America written on the spot by a sympathetic observer. The author had visited just about every sort of American engaged in honest labor and had tried in every instance to get the viewpoint of the men engaged in their tasks, not the viewpoint of a mere reader a thousand miles away. One of his visits took him to the home of a horse trainer, and there the writer made his strangest mistake. In commenting on the passing of the horse, the writer prophesied that the horse was coming back, that it would not be more than twenty years until it would again be as important as it had ever been, in spite of autos, tractors, and machinery in general. The book was published in 1936, just twenty years ago. It is not necessary to comment on the failure of the prophecy. I fear the author did a bit of wistful thinking rather than any real prophesying. It seemed to me in 1936, and earlier, that the horse was a passing institution. My own three-article essay for this series on "The Old Family Nag" appeared in 1935 and was actually a rewrite of one that I had prepared in 1925, originally as an after-dinner speech. Certainly it was obvious away back then that, for better or for worse, the horse was losing ground except as a plaything, such as our race horses, our ponies for children to ride or drive, and the nags kept to rent for riding trails in parks. In spite of our idealization of the days when the horse was an all-important adjunct of our farms, we will have to admit that Old Nell or Old Mag or Old Sam is gone for good.

Thomas Bailey Aldrich, in his inimitable STORY OF A BAD BOY, tells of an eccentric in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, who, after the War of 1812, decided to make a fortune by buying up the discarded guns used by the army then and selling them back to the government when another war broke out. The poor old fellow finally had to go to the poorhouse, and his

numerous small cannon were dumped on the seashore, a temptation to the bad boys to fill them with powder and something that would serve for shot and scare the daylights out of the sleepy townspeople one fall night. I have often thought of that funny chapter when I have watched people who refuse to admit that change, not staying put, is the normal rule of things, ~~not staying put.~~

The strangest event, in this sort of thing, I have ever ~~not~~ known with was my meeting the boy, still under twenty-one, who wanted the Civil War to start all over again. Rip Van Winkle, arising from his twenty years of slumber, was away ahead of this good-looking and rather well-informed central Kentucky youth, for Rip slept only twenty years. Even the old boys who actually fought in the Civil War never, in my presence, wished for a resumption of hostilities. Maybe they were not altogether satisfied with the results of that strange, pathetic conflict, but they did not want shooting to start all over again.

One of my former students, an eccentric but devoted man in his calling as a schoolteacher, worked for many years of his professional life to maintain the one-roomed school. His theory was that that sort of educational setup is the most effective way of conducting our public schools; he felt that the three R's could more effectively be taught thus. His county followed him for many years, so that it still has a larger percentage of one-roomed country schools than any neighboring county. And there is much to be said for his strange theory, so out of line with what is going one everywhere. But my student, now retired, surely reads more widely than the items in his small county paper, he owns a radio or TV, he drives a car, he has a telephone, he gets his mail daily; I wonder whether it has ever occurred to him that he is a bit inconsistent about his pet theory. I admire his grit in trying to put into every one-roomed school a devoted teacher, but I am afraid that he is as much out of date as the author who believed in 1936 that the horse was staging a comeback that would, by 1956, make horses as numerous as they had ever been in America.

NEW-SMELLING BOOKS

Tomorrow morning I shall take an armload of books and walk across the campus to start a new year of teaching, my fiftieth. Most of my books have lost their distinctive smell, a combination of printer's ink and glue, I suppose, but enough of this odor is left to remind me of the new-smelling books that made delightful some of the days I spent at Fidelity. You see, school textbooks did not change very often, and it was somewhat rare to have a new book. I was the littlest one of a good-sized family and thus inherited my clothes and my books alike. My dog-eared spelling book may have been instrumental in teaching my five older brothers and sisters that there is a best way to spell even the simplest words. Dirty pages showed where the studying had been the hardest, where it might have been necessary for some boy or girl of my family to stay in after school until the hard words were mastered. Rather oddly, most of these dirty pages were not of the long-tailed words in _osity_ and _ation_ but were of words that many a person in my own classes still finds hard, words that are confused: lose, loose; sit, set; lie, lay; maintain, maintenance. But, once in a great while, some book wore out or was actually superseded as a text. Then I could count of having a brand-new one, odor and all.

In my many years in the out-of-doors I have known flowers of hundreds of kinds; I have known the smells of plowed earth, of fallen leaves, of ferns and damp brakes, of spicewood and pine and cedar--but no odor awakes in me quite the poetic fervor ~~that~~ that seems resident in the odor of books. Actually printer's ink and glue are humble things, sizing of paper is of humble origin, too; but a combination of these things set and still sets my imagination wild. It awakens in me a dream of romance, of far-away travel, of looking on events of great importance in the WORLD OUTSIDE. Of course, you practical ones will say that I have a good associative memory, that by some freak I came to feel that this odor had some connection with the things I read in books. Very well,

I might agree with you on any day except the first day of school. But I will reserve my own opinion that this odor does have some connection with romance, with things over the hills and far away.

As I have said before, long ago, every book we owned, or had borrowed, when I was a youth had its distinctive odor, not necessarily like that of the new textbooks. I suppose that the inks used in printing the family Bible, with its colored and black and white pictures, were chiefly responsible for the strange, front-room odor that I always associate with Bible stories. Just a week ago, when I spoke at a county Sunday School convention, I found that same odor in the Bible on the preacher's stand. If it is not the proper odor for a Bible, what is it? Every year or so some book agent would come through Fidelity and persuade us to buy a book or two: CONQUERING THE DARK CONTINENT, THE JOHNSTOWN FLOOD, OUR NEW POSSESSIONS(Cuba, the Philippines, etc.), etc., etc. Each of these books had its distinctive odor, too, always bringing back the strange stories of the poorly-written text.

Our neighborhood had a lot of cheap reprints of famous and near-famous novels. Few of the volumes had kept their covers through the mighty reading that each had undergone, for a whole neighborhood can soon make a poorly-bound book look pretty dirty and ragged. The most tearful parts of the novels had fingerprints and, I suspect, tear stains. Poor paper, printer's ink, plain grime, and tears somewhat soured made up a sort of smell that I do not recall having met since my early days. Maybe that odor was also a reflection of the contents of the sob stories that we dearly loved; the sobbiest, the better.

But I vote first for the thin little books, fresh from the press, that we toted on our first days at school, books that told of Mary and her lamb, of twinkling stars, of Harry and the guidepost, of the boy on the burning deck. Or they may have been geography books that took us as far away as the ends of the earth, or history books that made us contemporaries with the great and good of all time. And, on top of everything else, these were <u>our</u> books, to have and to hold until death.

When I tried recently to tell a freshman girl who is a good friend of the family about silk stockings as a badge of being dressed up, she naively asked, "What are silk stockings?" Imagine that! Why, those ladies of other times, now pretty old, maybe, or lying in the old family cemetery, must have turned over in their graves or else turned, rather painfully, in their arm chairs, if arm chairs still exist.

Now, back in Fidelity around the turn of the century and for some time afterwards, it was a mark of high distinction to be the owner of such a luxury as a pair of silk stockings. Somewhat later it was just the mark of being a well-dressed woman, neither rich nor famous. A famous school in the state used to rule out silk stockings, as it was a mark of having spent too much money for clothes, and it tried to cater to those who needed an education but had limited means to get it. Many former students of mine, who had spent some time in that college, used to tell gleefully how they had managed to get by the authorities and wickedly wear the daring, expensive silk stockings and even (Horrors!) silk dresses! Maybe that was why they were still in college but at Western instead of the other college.

This question of silk brings up another memory that many younger ones will not believe, but I can rely on those who are unashamedly old to stand by me. Preachers at Fidelity and elsewhere tore into the subject of silk garments with all the zeal of Oriental reformers, declaring that any such extravagance was wicked, sure to lead down the primrose path. Young girls who sat through such tirades are now, like this chronicler, wearing false teeth and bifocals and are regarded by their children and grandchildren as pretty safe, even as old fogies, that name that reappears in every generation to describe those a bit older than the ones who use the term. I wonder what the parson at Fidelity now talks about that

could give such vim to his voice as did this symbol of extravagance or even wickedness. Of course, stockings were slightly hush-hush, anyway; silk only gave an added bit of wickedness.

It is said to be good to confess one's sins. Here goes! When the first girl who was majoring in English wore bobby socks to my class, with never a blush in sight, I called her into my office and spoke about as follows: "Irene(that was part of her name), somehow you are not the type of girl that I would expect to rush the style. I know that you are a fine girl, modest, intelligent, moral; but I am afraid that somebody else, who does not know you as well as I do, might think otherwise." She, being just what I said she was, took my embarrassed suggestion very kindly, smiled engagingly, and left. To save my life, I cannot recall whether she clung to the wicked bobby socks or not. No dire prophecies were necessary, it seems, for not long after my abbreviated curtain lecture she married a promising young medical student, taught school in Jefferson County to help pay his way through, and for years she and he, with their two children, have been solid, substantial citizens of a good-sized town where he is practicing his profession. Every time I think of this little conference, I smile at myself and others who have felt that change seems often a bit too-too. I am sure that this rather silly talk has made me think twice several times since then before I made too rash an assertion about as simple a thing as whether a girl wears long stockings or bobby socks or no socks or stockings at all. Tomorrow I will be teaching a Saturday class of in-service teachers, hard-working women, most of them mothers and a few of them grandmothers, who drive in for miles and miles to carry on their education. Since it is still warm weather now, I will wager a coke that several of them will be stockingless. Again, how those old-timers would have been shocked beyond recovery! Maybe such shocking manners by the younger generation accounts for the short lives of many of the women and men of the older generation.

All of us have heard many times of the honest old Quaker gentleman who told his demure wife: "All the world is queer but me and thee, and thee is a little queer." Probably his Quaker neighbors would have added the old fellow himself to the queer list. But the odd thing is that queer ones used to be a dime a dozen, anyway. Though there are still some people who are eccentric, even to the point of being suspected as "teched in the head," the total number of oddities seems to me to be decreasing rapidly.

Years ago I reviewed in this column a very fascinating book called GRANDFATHER WAS QUEER, a collection of ~~character~~ sketches of quaint characters who used to live in New England, two to four generations ago. Rather oddly, I found very few in that list who seemed strange to me. You see, Fidelity had its quota of nuts and other queer creatures. An occasional one got so queer that we had to send him off to what was called, rather harshly, a lunatic asylum. But, if some outsiders had set up a court of inquiry and investigated the rest of us, the institutions, as we mildly call them now, would have been bursting at the seams. Fortunately, as one of my college teachers used to say, nobody ever publicly challenged our sanity. As a result, most of us remained loose, able to be as unpredictable as ever.

Some families felt that it was cruel to incarcerate these strange ones. If the Lord had not wanted them to be off center, he would not have made them that a-way." Besides, who knew but that half wits and other unfortunates were not sent as punishments for some horrible, even though secret , crimes done by the parents or by some member of the family? Since these unfortunates were around, they came to church with their folks; the rest of us were used to them and forgot to laugh, inside the church, at their strange ways. Of course, out of earshot of our elders

we acted out the pathetic creatures without a blush.

Considerably higher in the intellectual scale than these half wits were other people who were equally unpredictable. Some of them could read and write and even were readers of big books. But they had different standards of cleanliness, of dress, of speech, of thinking. Going to meeting at that time offered a good many surprises to enliven the brimstone nature of the sermons we heard. Some eccentric might be there in a queer garb or might actually get to shouting and fairly steal the show. Many a neck of a proud Fidelity solid citizen drooped visibly when some such person broke out in meeting.

And then there were still others, at Fidelity, at least, who might have got into the old Quaker's category of being queer. Some of these, from time to time, I have told about in this column: the miller who read books that seemed too unreal to be true and who thus got the reputation of being an atheist or some equally bad person; the village wag, who knew no restraints in his endless imitation of personages of our community; the neighbor who could get a case of the pouts and not speak to his family for days at a stretch and who sometimes, after he got old, would run away like some spoiled brat; the greasy hired man who talked big about witchcraft and believed that even his own son had suffered because of some evil-eyed neighbor; the poor fellow who somehow made a living for himself and his family, even though he never learned to distinguish I and me and used the latter as the subject all his rather long life; the colored man who could not read and write but who could still make remarks that revealed a very rare judgment of his master. No wonder, when I think of it, that my brothers-in-law used to say that everyone in my little village of Fidelity was queer! Standardization, as revealed in cars and radios and television and R. E. A. and the Fidelity High School, has done much to make our little world at Fidelity painfully like the rest of the world; all the queer ones are not dead, but queerness as such is retreating before our modern leveling of society.

Some of Our Deficiencies

An eminent folklorist recently called my attention to some of the ways in which western Kentucky is poor in some phases of folklore. I had long been aware of some of these deficiencies but had not thought of others. About the same time I was asked to set down all I knew of animal lore as it appeared at Fidelity; I discovered that there was not much animal lore there, not much, that is, as compared with the mountain areas in Kentucky, the neighboring Appalachian states, and the Ozarks. It is true that we had some lore, most of which was taken rather comically, not actually believed by the most ignorant, so far as I can recall. But Vance Randolph could have found in one day in the Ozarks more animal lore than I ever knew until I left Fidelity and began to read folklore collections.

Naturally, you may want to know why there was no more of this type of folklore. My theory is that a very large percentage of the people at Fidelity had come in a body from long-settled areas of North Carolina and had forgotten most of the animal lore that they may have known. Even the ex-slaves seemed to have only a small group of beliefs, though in other spheres they were as folksy as the best. It is strange, however, that these transplanted Scotch-Irish did not bring more animal lore with them, especially since they were quite primitive in other beliefs.

~~This~~ The same folklorist that I mentioned at the beginning of this article also asked me whether I knew any lore connected with tobacco. Again I had to confess complete ignorance. She and I discussed the cycle of tobacco raising and the various methods of curing it, but there seemed to be no actual folkishness about all this. Maybe I have forgotten some of the customs and superstitions that were connected with tobacco and its growth and marketing; maybe there just were not any really folk beliefs at all.

A still further conversation between us revealed that neither of us knew any distinctly folkish beliefs that were connected with the river and steamboat days. Part of my ignorance is due to my not having any intimate connection with steamboats until I was grown and away from home. Maybe I never learned to know river men enough to absorb some of their customs and superstitions. Before the steamboats are entirely a thing of the past, some one should collect all the quaint beliefs and customs that once prevailed.

Our area was, of course, a farming section. Consequently, there were plenty of beliefs about signs and crop planting or harvesting, as well as quaint customs galore connected with every part of farm life. Probably two thirds of our beliefs about agriculture were genuine folklore, the other third being actual learning. Most of my neighbors, however, planted their crops without reference to the phases of the moon; I never knew anyone who consulted the calendar before butchering his hogs in late fall or early winter. I did not even know that such practices were in existence until I left Fidelity. I was told that one of our neighbors always planted his corn in the light of the moon, but I could see no difference between it and our corn on similar ground. The neighbors laughed among themselves about this neighbor and probably exaggerated his actual practices. It seems to me now, after many, many years away from Fidelity, that most of our quaint practices were not considered very seriously, even when we followed them rather faithfully. I think most of us felt that these ways of doing things were just for fun and were like trying one's fortune by looking down a well at midnight when the moon was full or sleeping with a piece of wedding cake under one's pillow. Of course, I could have been too dumb to know whether people actually believed these things.

Some of our folk heroes have had two lives running concurrently, like some prison sentences. Even folk heroes--that is, the ones who are flesh-and-blood people-- have to eat and sleep and wear clothes; therefore they have their own lives, even as you and I. And, quite often, these lives are not vastly different from the lives of other people of their time. But something happens to make a fairly ordinary man a folk hero, and at once he becomes another person and must live that life, too. And, too oftem, the part he is acting becomes our measure of the man himself.

Several of our great men were also folk heroes of a type. Thomas Paine caused so many people to sit up and take notice that he must have relished most of his folk character, particularly as it concerned his attack on aristocrats and monarchs. It would be expecting too much to believe that he did not swagger a little, even though he suffered practical martyrdom for his brave, though often tactless, championing of the downtrodden. It would be unfair to even our Abraham Lincoln not to say that he must have relished somewhat, in calm times, the character that was attributed to him. "Honest Abe" is certainly a weighty name to be toting around without doing something to justify it. On the other hand, he, as Paine must have done, probably often longed to be taken as an ordinary man. The champion, though, was P. T. Barnum, who capitalized on his romantic reputation. Those who attended his circus have left records of Mr. Barnum's dramatic entrance right in the midst of the circus performance; he would even go entirely around the ring, bowing and saying, "This is Mr. Barnum." He was able to sell himself and his circus in this way; you cannot help wondering whether he felt sheepish afterwards. For certainly even the men who have made heroes of themselves must

be alone occasionally and must feel that they are not doing too well in playing a double role.

Two of the most serious men I have ever known became unscious comedians. Quaint imitation was natural with both of them; it became easy to act out some of the serious things that they talked about. But many of thepeople who knew them took them to be just funny men and would have laughed at them at a funeral. Sometimes I have heard them say that they wished they could be taken seriously once in a while. But their admirers wanted them to perform, to raise a laugh; and so they went on being funny men, rarely making people see the satire beneath their antics.

Mark Twain is one of my favorite authors, in spite of his never knowing when there is no reason for being funny. He was basically an actor and could hardly be said to have had a single way of doing things. After he became famous, he loved to make an entrance into crowded hotels. He dressed in white, his hair and beard were snowy, and he bore himself with some of the quaint dignity that had been left over from his pilot days, when he was a personality to be reckoned with. It took me many years of careful reading to see beneath his stagecraft a very serious, even tragically serious, personality. He was expected to be funny, and he was funny, like the famous joke of the comedian who, unrecognized by a physician whom he consulted, was told to see himself as a cure for downheartedness. Mark Twain, quite obviously, often laughed to keep from crying or swearing. It must be a hard task, however, for anyone who must constantly play a part, to keep up the act. Though all of us are posers, most of our posing is thoroughly obvious, to us and to our friends. Only when we determine to be only the part we are playing do we become disgusting and scorned.

On the first cold morning of this winter one of my friends asked me whether I had seen any "rabbit ice" yet. That term at once reawakened many a memory, for that is what we called it more than a half century ago. Rabbit ice, for the benefit of late-comers who have just tuned in, is and was the ice that spews out around certain weeds on very cold nights while there is still some sap in the stalks. It is dainty and flower-like, looking almost too delicate to be true. The water content is very slight, so that it is almost as dainty as it looks, almost as dainty as snow flakes. We children, on our way to school, with our spindle shanks covered with home-knit stockings to keep us warm, used to gather handfuls of this stuff and eat it or whatever you might call transferring a few drops of icy water to our always-hungry mouths. I am sure that we did not regard it as ice but as some dainty confection that Jack Frost had made just for us. Whether any of the sap of the weeds might not have tasted bad I do not know; it would have spoiled our Eden to have found within it some such snake as suspicion of delicate things that cold nights provide.

Rabbit ice reminds me of many another name for objects in nature associated with animals. Some of these have become standard: rat's-bane, flea bane, catnip, dog fennel. But there were others that somehow elude the dictionary makers. We had "goose grass" all over the place, a low-growing member of the smartweed-buckwheat family. It, like some of the grasses, liked to grow along the edges of hard-tramped ground, like a path. Whether geese ate it in preference to other greenery I cannot remember. We also had "pepper grass," which many people called "hen or chicken pepper." It was also exceedingly common around yards and barnyards. It is a small plant of the mustard family, known to scientists as "shepherd's purse." I used to enjoy eating its biting, pepper-like leaves; again I do not know

whether chickens liked it or not.

One of the oddities of language is that no one can prophesy which words will remain, which will become standard, which will never rise above folk usage. Names of plants and animals are among these words that may or may not remain in good usage. And yet nearly all of them are picturesque, whether accepted or not. Snakeroot sounds like some back-country name for a fake remedy for snake bite, and it was just that. But it has become the standard name for a whole family of plants and is as valid a name as dog fennel. Goat-sucker as a name for a bird sounds ridiculous, for it records a superstition that our ancestors brought from Europe, where other birds of that family are accused of milking goats. That name has been accepted, however, and is borne by the family to which our Nighthawk, Whip-poor-will, and Chuck-will's-widow belong. Scientists have even taken the meaning and coined a learned word to mean this: "Caprimulgidae," literally, "goat-milkers." Dogwood, dog fennel, dog bane; catnip, catclaw, cattail; horse mint, horse radish, horse chestnut--and so on and on, of standard words. Why not rabbit ice and hen pepper and the rest of those folk names that we used to know but which failed to get classy enough to have their places in a dictionary?

CABBAGE SNAKES AGAIN

Years ago in this column I discussed at some length the cabbage-snake scare that swept over our Fidelity community in 1904 or 1905. About the time that I wrote the article, one of our professors at Western, who had been reared in Arkansas, told me that the same scare went through his neighborhood at approximately the same time. Neither of us at that time had ever heard anybody else say anything about the superstition. Since that time I have asked a good many people and have found that cabbage snakes appeared just about everywhere in western Kentucky in the early days of the century, worried a number of superstitious people, and then disappeared, along with many another folk animal or varmint.

Today in the mail came a reassurance of my slightly-faulty memory, a newspaper clipping from the MOUNTAIN EAGLE, of Laurel County, dated March 2, 1910:

"NO CABBAGE SNAKE

"Dr. J. G. Owsley of Lily telephoned us yesterday regarding the case of poisoning of S. W. Gregory and family. Dr. Owsley sent the 'thing' found in the cabbage to Lexington to be analyzed and received a report it was not a cabbage snake but a species of 'thousand leg.' This is to state you can now go ahead and raise all the cabbage you want this season.'"

I am indebted to Mr. Marie Campbell, now of Indiana University, a persistent collector of folklore, for this item. You will notice that it shows the scare lasted some years after our Fidelity outbreak. The item is a bit hazy about there being a cabbage snake, even though it says the present case was of something else. I wish I knew about that scare and how many heads of cabbage rotted in gardens because people were afraid to eat the poisoned vegetable.

One reason this superstition has always intrigued me is that it does not follow the usual course of folk beliefs. Most beliefs go away back into dim past experiences, so far back that there is no dating of them. Ancestors believed certain things which they in turn had been told in still remoter times; modern believers would be startled if asked when people began to believe that Friday is unlucky or the hoot of an owl portends sorrow. Either of these can be traced through hundreds or thousands of years as already sufficiently widely known to appear in writings of all sorts. Think how long they must have passed by word of mouth before anybody who could write set them down! But the cabbage snake suddenly arose and as suddenly died. It raised its snaky head only in that brief time, so far as I can learn. For us at Fidelity it was a one-year superstition; it may have lasted a bit longer elsewhere.

Since I was about grown up when the mania came, I recall that some of us thought that people may have got sick after eating cabbage and other things and suspected arsenate of lead, just then coming into use in our remote place and pretty badly feared. Just how widespread the dusting of cabbage with Paris green or arsenate of lead was I do not know. Maybe the sight of an ordinary cabbage worm, the larva of the pretty cabbage butterfly, may have set off some of this hysteria. It is highly probable that many a person had lived a long time without having ever actually examined the cabbage worm; a spell of sick stomach combined with fear of the newly-used poison, may have started the fear. But the question still remains: "Why was the scare so limited in time?"

The more I recall the things we were told when I was small, the more I remember that most of the time we were told, "Don't." I am reminded of a great Welsh speaker that I once heard, who said that he would not tell us much about his childhood except to say that we could gather what he was like by his mother's saying to the nurse: "Go see what that boy is doing and tell him not to do it."

Here are some "Don'ts" I have heard:

1. Don't set a hen in Dog Days.

2. Don't go in swimming in Dog Days.

Dog Days, when Sirius is riding high, have been suspected since ancient times, even by people much brighter than you and I. Dogs are likely to go mad then; even dew is poisonous to feet and water to sweaty, smelly bodies. Sore toes get pretty numerous then, necessitating a generous wrapping of toes with rags that soon become dirty rags.

3. Don't plant potatoes in the light of the moon. Potatoes planted then go to tops and make very sorry taters.

4. Don't cut out a dress or any other garment on Friday unless you can finish it before the week is over. This superstition is as ancient as the human race, I suspect. It was as common in classical times as it has ever been since. Friday is Venus's day. Venus is changeable, not to be trusted. Even the weather on Venus's day is unpredictable. "Friday is fairest or foulest."

5. Don't sleep with the windows open. Poisonous air, called even at Fidelity "miasmatic vapors," will come in and poison you while you are asleep. Incidentally, along with the miasmatic vapors will come malaria mosquitoes, but nobody seemed to know that then. Where were the screens? Such a foolish question. There had been none in the Garden of Eden, and there were none in Fidelity until I was a good-sized boy.

6. Don't kill a toad-frog. If you do, your cow will give bloody milk. Even in my littlest childhood I doubted this and felt that the originator of the superstition was merely trying to get us to be humane. I did not want to kill a toad, anyway, but I have seen lads fiendishly kill toads with the same aplomb that grown-ups had when they slaughtered a snake, inwardly rejoicing that they had punished Satan himself just a little bit more by killing the serpent that was descended from the one that tempted Eve.

7. Don't step over a puppy. If you do, you will cause it to be a dwarf. Some people have gone so far as to say that you must not step over a small child crawling on the floor, and for the same reason. Maybe some of the smallish people I knew had been thus cursed before they were old enough to do anything about it.

8. Don't eat mulberries. Inside the fruit, we were told, were grubs of some insect, probably Seventeen-year Locusts, which would poison us for sure. This is one of the few superstitions that I followed faithfully as a child, taking as gospel truth what the elders said. And though I have learned to eat nearly everything that grows, I still do not especially like wild mulberries, probably because I did not learn to like them early in life when I was starved all the time.

9. Don't look cross-eyed at a baby or stand at the head of its bed. Either act will make the poor little thing cross-eyed permanently.

10. Don't talk while you are fishing. You will scare the fish and thus get no catch. That irked me beyond words when I went fishing with Father, for I just had to make some remarks when I caught a sunfish or a catfish or a topwater. In spite of elaborate scoldings, I persisted in talking, and my string of fish was as long as anybody's. That one experience made me doubt the accuracy of that "Don't" and many another one.

Many of my acquaintances have asked me whether people actually believe the strange things that I write about. That is like asking whether a pig loves to root or a fish to swim or a dog to bark. Of course, most of the people who recommend their own private remedies for human ills believe implicitly in what they have heard and have kept alive. I have tried not to put on an air of questioning when I have listened to folk stories or folk remedies ~~and~~ or folk superstitions. A few times I have said something or given the teller such a look that I got scolded for my unbelief.

One of our elderly neighbors once told me how she cured chills and fever in her daughter, the very one that I used to look at with watery eyes and the very girl with whom I had my first date. The mother, a highly-respected woman of Fidelity, daid that Helen, let us call her, was afflicted with ague(chills and fever) for ever so long until the mother finally cured her for good. She(the mother) went into her garden and gathered nine kinds of weeds or plants, tied them up in a rag, and placed them up inside the chimney, where nothing would torch them until they dried up and disappeared. Some weeks later the ague left and stayed left. Even though I was a teen-age boy, I wanted to show disbelief, but it would not do to get in Dutch with the mother of my girl friend.

I was not so tactful when I once had a crop of carbuncles, many years later. I accidentally mentioned to my garage man about having some boils on my back that had cores in them. He stopped(on my time) and gave me a sure-shot remedy: nine buckshot, taken like pills, one a day. I laughed slightly and got a severe reprimand for so doing. The mechanic felt that I was making fun of him. He was much better off financially than I had ever been or ever would be. I thought he was merely spoofing me; he was deadly in earnest. I have regretted

many times that I laughed too soon. If I had looked serious, I might have learned hosts of other remedies, remedies that might have saved me a lot of troublesome doctor's bills. He might have had a sure cure for goiter, the one thorn-in-the-flesh that has dogged me for a big portion of my lifetime.

Years ago, when my town did not have any sewer system, I employed a colored man and his helper to dig a sink for me. If we found one, they were to build a septic tank and let it drain into the underground stream or cave. As usual, I was around when everything was getting ready. The helper, a much younger man than the "contractor," took a forked switch and started locating the stream that would be the drain for the septic tank. I looked on, as solemn as a judge, for I wanted to know the whole story of water-witching. The young man walked across the part of my yard where the drain ought to be to connect with the plumbing already in existence, grasping firmly his forked switch with both hands. Then he crossed this base line at several places, finally being satisfied with one spot. There the two set to work and drilled a hole through the overlying limestone, soon stfiking a small crevice(called "clevis" locally). The place was walled up, a septic tank was installed, and, you expect me to say, everything was lovely. Instead, the whole think was a failure from the start. There was not enough crevice to take the water from a one-inch hose. I remained silent, in order to learn a great folk secret, but I paid dearly in dollars and cents for a sink that caused only trouble as long as I tried to use it. Maybe I should have questioned the water witch, who was as solemn in his water-witching as any pall bearer ever was. Did he believe it? You bet. At least I saw no signs of skepticism on his earnest face. I did not believe, but I just had to have a sink.

UNEXPECTED LEARNING

The more books I have read and the more formal education I have tried to acquire, the more I have been amazed at some of the unexpected learning that primitive communities used to have. In our little Fidelity neighborhood there were only a few books, relatively speaking; nobody had had as much as a high school education of that time or ours; our poor little school was taught by teachers who had had little or nothing beyond eighth grade work; our leaders, such as preachers, were plain ignorant. But in spite of this outward appearance of ignorance and backwardness, there were several men and women of my acquaintance who could have felt completely at home in the most intellectual groups. With a bit of actual reading and a whole heap of plain horse sense, they had arrived at conclusions that would have made them famous if they had not lived in such a far-away place, like Thomas Gray's dead who once inhabited a small English country village. So intelligent were some of these that I was astonished to find, when I went away to college, that many of my teachers, with all their opportunities for advancement, had not come as far as some of the folks at Fidelity in viewing great problems of human conduct and relations. Frankly, it was no shock but a continuation of what I had been used to when I heard people philosophize, basing their faith on things they had learned in books rather than from life in a remote place.

The taste for learning was and is a queer thing. Think of the many mothers, like my own, who had reared a half dozen to a dozen children with few of the so-called advantages of civilization. And yet some of those mothers, not educated in books or schools, had read more widely than many a college graduate that I know and had a love for great books that would have been commendable in anybody's generation. When people came in to sit till bedtime at Father's, there was many a

yarn about pioneers and Civil War times, but, before the evening was over, there were discussions of politics or religion or nature that would not be beneath discussions of the learned and the great. And, the astonishing thing about it all, the clarity of expression, sometimes but not always homely, would have done credit to a gathering of college people from older-settled places than Fidelity. I was deeply impressed, in later years [redacted], to come across Lincoln's account of how crude but thinking men used to come to his cabin home and talk as well as they could about great national issues. Then, when the lanky boy had climbed up into the loft to sleep, he would go over the discussions he had heard and try to state a little more clearly the points that the men had made, however crude their language may have been. As a lad who had no part in the conversation, I listened to Father and the visitors discuss such serious things as [redacted] the causes and results of the Civil War, the good and bad qualities of slavery, the respective merits of Free Silver, the prospects of better times for farming, the tragedy of worn-out soils, the still greater tragedy of decadent moral codes as it was shown in some of our people who returned to a more primitive time faster than the rest of us could keep up with the procession of the better portion of our race. Doesn't that just about cover nearly every phase of life, then and now? Do not understand me to say that the solutions were always sensible, but it is amazing how many times they were. Life was just as vital there as anywhere else; my neighbors and my father met it as heroically as their experience and intellects permitted. I rejoice, belatedly, that I grew up in an atmosphere of discussion, where ideas were of more importance than physical belongings. And this is no old man's defective memory alone, for I have at my side a pile of diaries that record what we said and did for several years of my life at Fidelity, written on the spot, with no idea of its ever being important.

DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

In my essay last week I may have left the impression that all the people in Fidelity were philosophers, all were able to discuss weighty problems. I certainly did not mean to do any such thing, though I did want to indicate that even our little village and its surrounding area had people who loved to talk about things in life that most matter. Sometimes it has been hard for me to convey to younger people the strange organization of our neighborhood. Outwardly it was democratic to the limit. In our school, in our churches, in most of our social gatherings there were no caste lines drawn; the humblest and the best-fixed--and they were not far apart financially--came together with an ease that was and is commendable. My father, for one, would have punished me severely if I had shown any favoritism to the youngsters that came from the homes with better-than-average comforts. The hired man was just as much a part of the family of the average farmer as the son or daughter; in very rare instances some hired man did not live up to this confidence and was soon employed elsewhere. A visitor from a place where society is pretty well stratified would have thought us hopelessly democratic, blind to natural differences that exist among men.

But under this outward democracy there was a sort of benignant paternalism that, in most cases, was hardly aware of itself. Nearly every little man was protected and upheld by some slightly larger man. Not only did farmers "stand good" for their colored hands, but they were often behind the efforts of many white men who needed a friend or a backer. Most of the few storekeepers at Fidelity and near by knew that, in general, a debt owed by Mr. B was somewhat assured because of his friendship with Mr. C. Not everybody collected all that was owed to him, but it is certain that the little man, backed by

a larger man, could nearly always be expected to do as well as the average.

A thing that always was noted by my brother and me was that among our colored friends this same paternalistic attitude prevalled. Some of the colored families had white friends who saw to it that nobody suffered. Some, however, put themselves under the care of their own race. There were a few well-to-do ex-slaves who were patrons to their race. We used to see the team of one of these richer ones going up the road toward Fidelity; we nearly always guessed rightly that some hanger-on of Jim or John had died, and the better-off colored man was assuming the expense of a coffin. One of these colored men had a huge acreage of land that he had gradually acquired; on his farms lived less fortunate ones than he, who yielded to him a sort of vassal reverence that I have seldom seen anywhere else in my life.

It has amused me to remember how the leaders in our little society were hardly aware of their leadership. They would have sworn that they were in no sense other than the rest of the folks. Often they lived in no better houses and had no more actual income, but "their words were as good as their bonds" at the country store or at the county seat. No one would have ever dared to think, even alone, that he was a vassal of some outstanding man of our Fidelity; but some of us who lived there and went away love to recall how many of our philosophies of life, our attitudes toward life and death and good and bad, came from these unconsciously stalwart ones. If anyone had told us that we were a paternalistic society, we would have rebelled (that is, after we had looked up that big word in a dictionary). We thought, as who doesn't, that we each stood squarely on our own toes. I wonder whether this type of community organization is still functioning intact.

Convulsions, Spasms, and Fits

One of my colleagues showed me an article in a sports magazine in which the author said that an old squatter in Texas had died of fits. Then the author explained himself by saying that there were social degrees revealed by the term used: the upper crust had convulsions, the lowest class had fits, the rest of us had spasms. The author has something on his side, for I can recall how often the standing of a person was shown by what was the matter with him. Poor white trash sometimes had fittified children; brats just like them but living in better homes at Fidelity had epilepsy. Many a plain person had bellyache or, on a slightly higher level, stomachache. Only about the time I left Fidelity, fifty years ago, had people of several social castes begun to have operations for appendicitis or to have digestive troubles. We knew of asthma and sniffles but had not yet heard of allergies. We had seen people who looked as good as any of us but who ran a temperature in the afternoon or when work needed to be done; many of us felt that these folks were just plain lazy, though sometimes more sympathetic people said that the trouble was walking typhoid fever. It was ages before I learned that some of my neighbors had had undulant fever, now a fashionable disease and an expensive one. My own boy endured nine years of it from drinking unpasteurized milk down in Florida, and it got to be pretty expensive on both of us. At Fidelity he would have taken some quinine and calomel and bitters and kept on running a temperature, pretty much ignored by those who were in better health.

Many philologists have made lists of words on different levels, lists that reveal a lot of human pride in being up on the social ladder. Long ago in this column I ranked victuals, grub, food, eats, and some'n'd'eat

as they appeared to me then and now. It takes a lot of adjusting to remember where I am, for my knowledge of food in its various forms might tempt me to use the wrong word. When greens became fashionable again, some years ago, I lost no time in reminding some of my dainty friends of their unnecessary contempt for plain but needed foods. One of these same friends has probably never forgiven me for telling her that I had won out, that my plebeian tastes had been justified.

But we plain Kentuckians are not alone in this constant stuggle between the lower-downs and the higher-ups. In classic times the Romans had good words for everything, and less-good ones, too. The illiterate, the smart-alec, and the foreigner often must have felt out of place. But, as the empire spread over western Europe, the words, high and low, spread, too; and the irony of it all is that many a low word in Latin times became the ancestor of the exquisite French or Spanish word of today. Take the matter of eating, for instance: edo was the Latin word meaning "to eat," but there was a slangy one something like mango, which meant "to eat undaintily, to gobble." That lowly word, however, came down as manger, the dignified word of French. I have often wondered whether some exquisite French or other Latin descendant has not blushed for the coarseness of their ancestors in using such earthy words. Dozens of other pairs of words could be cited to show that the Latins and their descendants were fighting, as we are, a losing battle against plain, homely, even coarse, words. Who knows but that some of our most atrocious slang may be ultimately the most careful, the most exquisite English?

Staying at the Hotel

In the fall of 1956 my wife, a friend, and I drove into the Tennessee mountains to see the gorgeous fall colors. We spent the night in a small mountain county-seat town in a big, roomy, ramshackly hotel, the only guests for that frosty night. Our rooms were great big ones, with space for a good eight guests in one of them. In addition, we had a sitting room as large as most hotel rooms, and all of this was at a ridiculously low price. We had driven over the mountain late in the afternoon, just to stay in the midst of the autumn glories and a little fearful that we might not find a place to stay. When actual night had come on, the town was chockfull of people, attending the picture show, eating at the three or four restaurants, roaming the streets talking politics, or just sitting around garages or in the main lobby of the hotel. By late bedtime there was not a car to be seen but my own; the town had cleared out for the night. Some of those cars had driven back over a mountain or two or even farther in a fraction of the time that Grandpap would have taken to come to county court. And it was Grandpap's time that had seen the coming of the big hotel by the side of the courthouse square, the hotel that was once so crammed with guests but was now almost deserted.

After the crowds were gone and the next morning we talked about the good old days, when a trip to the county seat meant so much to people of this wide-spreading mountain county. In order to be on hand for jury duty, Grandpap must have got up, like the woman in Proverbs, before daylight and must have ridden his horse hard to get to town in time for court. If he were on the jury or was a witness, and if the trials lasted on and on, it was humanly impossible for him to go and come in any one day; hence he had to put up at the big hotel, eat in the big dining room, now deserted, and frequently be crowded into a room with several other fellows to be sure that everybody was cared for.

When he got back home, across the mountain or far up the ridge, the family would quiz him about the miraculous things seen at town and of his strange, romantic life in the hotel.

And the old hotel had other great occasions, too. Eating at a hotel was once almost the height of great good fortune. Restaurants were scarce and not very classy then. Long after restaurants had become the fashionable places to eat, some of my acquaintances would not have been caught dead in one; they ate at hotels, even after some of the hotels had become pretty ratty. Our county newspaper that came to us at Fidelity used to publish anything(including my weekly news from our neck of the woods); one such thing would be a list of people registered at the hotel. Nine tenths of the names were of people who had eaten a single meal, probably while in the town on Saturday. One of our neighbors, always in debt and never likely to get out, regularly ate at the hotel when he was in town; you wouldn't have caught him eating out of a shoebox back at the wagon on a vacant lot. No one ever published a list of those who ate at the wagon.

The restaurant has largely taken over the function of feeding people; the motel, at least along the roads and in small towns, has cared for the lodging. The hotel, often pretty well built and once a handsome building, often stands as a sort of ghost building or sometimes is cut up into apartments or even devoted to such humble uses as storerooms or shops. In a little village where I taught, nearly half a century ago, there was one of these large wooden hotels that had already seen its best days. The few travelers who came to the village got their business transacted in time to catch the afternoon train to a larger place. Consequently, only the big dining room was ever used in style and that only when the local Masons or some other order threw a big neighborhood party and dinner. Beyond the coal-oil lamps and their glare, the old building was peopled with ghosts of the great days when the little village was famous for its hotel fare. Sic transit!

T+C

THE COUNTRY DOCTOR AGAIN

When I opened my mail one day in mid-January, 1957, I was surprised to find my own doctor-father the subject of a very understanding and fascinating article in a newspaper from my native county. The writer, an elderly retired Methodist preacher, had known Father away back in the latter part of the 1800's and the very early years of the present century. When he retired, he came back to Calloway County to live, and he wisely refused to grow old merely because he was no longer a full-time minister. He began to write up some memories of his old friends of other times, diligently securing all available information from the people who would know best about the life and achievements of famous old-timers. Members of my family and I gave some data to him about Father, which he has worked into a readable and valuable article. The best single feature of the article is the author's recognition of the country doctor as an institution, not just a mere profession. He knew Father's strange devotion to his calling and the hardships attendant upon it. Thus he has been able to present Father as a typical, but very individual, representative of a noble profession and a late saddle-bags philosopher as well as a physician that everybody loved and respected.

It is hard for younger people to realize how much a doctor's clientele depended upon him in the older times. Often, as with my Father, the doctor was the only educated man of the neighborhood, at least, the only one formally educated. Consequently, there were ten thousand questions asked him on every conceivable subject. He was supposed to know about history and geography and books as well as about quinine and calomel and blister plasters and phlebotomy. And his services were needed for sick animals as well as for sick people. He was the local tooth-puller, though he did not make dentures or fill teeth. Before the days of telephones, people saved up questions to ask "Dr. Wilson the next time you see him."

When you drive through Father's area of practice, you wonder at the hardships that the elderly preacher and I have talked about. Nearly every house can now be reached by car; the whole territory can be crossed in a matter of fifteen or twenty minutes. But you must picture a time when mud roads or mere trails were the rule down in Calloway County, when it took an hour to ride two to four miles, when in winter time a buggy was more a liability than an asset in getting around. You who live on hard roads or in rocky country should see that mud when it is thoroughly stirred up, especially after a heavy rain followed by freezing weather.

A country doctor's worst trouble was not the weather, however. Crude ignorance beset him everywhere he turned. His most highly-respected medicines--that is, respected by medical men--might never have a chance at relieving pain or suffering, for some elderly granny might follow the doctor to the cabin or cottage and prescribe some awful-tasting stuff that helped bring on worse conditions or even death itself. Of course, if the patient died, the doctor got the blame. Since very seldom any money passed between the doctored and the doctor, there was no refusal to pay when the medicines failed to work as planned.

As I look back now, when I am older than my father became, I wonder still at the strange fearlessness that he had in going into a sick room. What was smallpox or any other contagious or infectious disease to him? Wasn't he a physician? That was enough to say that he would do his part and trust the rest. The people who called him, for the most part, believed that he had some sort of magic that he worked or could work. The better people realized that the doctor merely helped nature assert itself again, but they also knew that the doctor's knowledge was all that stood between their loved ones and death. Maybe you and I, rather blasé and skeptical in our modern world, still feel this same mysterious skill of the doctor. Just today my own family physician examined my goitre, took my blood pressure, listened to my heart, and told me that I was as sound as a dollar. I walked out of his office feeling like a man much younger than the almanac says I am, thanks to the faith that we felt and still feel in the knowledge of the family doctor, old or young.

JOHNNY AND HIS READING

Since everybody is discussing Johnny and his reading these days, and since I have been a teacher for fifty years, come next July 1, I should be expected to have some notions about Johnny and his ability or inability to read and spell and write sentences. My list of students now is nearly 36,000, since that first one-room school I taught in 1907. And nearly all of them have been the products of our public schools of Kentucky and neighboring states. And throughout most of that half century I have made frequent, almost yearly, studies of what my students have done and how well they live up to regional and national standards.

Johnny, poor little boy, is nearly as bad off in some ways as he is pictured. He can hardly read, and he apparently does not read unless compelled to do so. Of course, I do not mean the upper half of my students as they classify themselves on placement tests. I am afraid that I, like the writers of the Old Testament, remember too well the misdeeds of the poorer ones and fail to recall the above-average deeds of the better ones. There has never been a time when the poorly-prepared students in my department have outnumbered the well-prepared ones. My teachers and I have given countless hours in our efforts to raise the standards of the ones who did not get what a high school should teach. I fear, sometimes, that we have not given as much time to the good ones as they deserve; of course, our theory is that these can take care of themselves with only a little direction and supervision.

Some of us old-timers, in our condemnation of poor students, forget the poor ones we used to have. It is true that the poor ones in early days eliminated themselves, for they were largely on their own money and soon felt that they were not getting enough value received to justify staying in school. Sometimes a few of these would get a better break and return to school with plenty of zeal and industry to acquire a college degree. But a very large percentage did not.

Occasionally some old-timer brags about how much the boys and girls learned in his one-room school, forgetting that only a small group ever finished the so-called grades there and not one in a hundred ever saw inside a high school or what even passed for one. With all my fondness for Fidelity and my early life there, I must confess that probably not half the children who attended school with me from 1895 to 1905 ever learned to read well enough to enjoy reading a simple book. Probably /about/ a fourth of them did not learn to read at all and were literate only in their ability to write their names, if such a severe task ever became necessary. These old-timers who have forgotten how few of their schoolmates became educated are again unaware of the vast number of people who have learned, in one generation, at least the rudiments of reading and writing. The amount of learning is pitifully small, but think what it would have been if former conditions had prevailed. And while you are thinking, recall how many college graduates there are today in any side of your county as compared with the same area in, say, 1925. And if you add the number of high school graduates, though some are poorly prepared, think how much above older conditions a typical community may be. I am sorry that our grade and high schools and colleges are turning out poorly prepared people; as an English teacher in a state-supported college I certainly have a right to such an opinion. Maybe I am sometimes a little too severe on the average student because he knows so little and knows that so poorly. I can see, though, that this process of bringing up hordes of people to a reasonable level of being literate is slow and even maddening. Maybe our very awareness of the pitiful ignorance of the products of our public schools will make us more earnest in making things better. We have not attained to perfection yet!

CHANGINGS STANDARDS OF VALUE

The very elderly man who was trying to impress me with his importance, like the Ancient Mariner, "held me with his glittering eye" as he detailed his land holdings, hundreds of acres of property that was gradually undermining his credit at the banks and hastening the day when he would become almost poverty-stricken after a long, long life of nominally holding a fortune in his hands. He had believed in land almost magically, feeling that the more acres, the greater his wealth. And so he had accumulated holdings, some of which would not bring enough to pay back taxes when they were finally sold. Land had been a word to conjure with when he had been born; he was a little too late in his arrival in the world to be a Civil War soldier, but no person who actually wore the gray uniform ever could have defended the plantation idea of the good life any better than he did. Like many another person who lives past his generation and especially past the philosophy that dominated his generation but became quite different later, he could see only evil in new things. What had been good form in the later nineteenth century was the only rule of conduct; upstarts who had introduced other ways of doing things should be ignored or snubbed. There used to be a correct way; all later forms were hopelessly and even wickedly wrong. And his almost a century of life only widened his differences with his later contemporaries.

This is in no sense an isolated case. It is desperately hard to adjust, sensibly, to changing conditions. Many of the queer people at Fidelity and Poduck felt that what had been in their youth was the only thing that should be; they battled manfully every attempt to introduce anything that differed from their childhood experiences. Politics, religion, learning, social customs, dress--these had reached their all-time high of perfection in the days of Father and Mother; since their time there had been only confusion and decay.

Long after the automobile was a necessity rather than a newfangled gadget that only moneyed people could afford, the same old gentleman whom I first mentioned regaled me with stories about his fine horses, dwelling fondly on their merits and their illustrious ancestry, even though it took a poet to see in the animals themselves other than stacks of bones. When I went riding with him once in an antique carriage that had been a great and honorable conveyance in its days, he had to turn out every few yards to let a car pass. Roads had not yet been widened to fit fast automobile traffic; hence a mere horse-drawn carriage had to take a long chance when it ventured on a much-travelled road. But, between spells of turning out to let the speed demons pass(probably then about thirty miles an hour on straight stretches) he told me of the great days of horses and of his in particular. Even his dog, a ragged-looking animal that looked anything but regal, was of a fine line of canines, with names that would make a member of a royal family proud. A few remarks every few yards about the cars that zoomed past served as a sort of Greek chorus to the account of great old times, when men were men and women were ladies.

When I think of this and many another incident when older people refused to believe that the earth had moved since the good old days, I am generally tolerant, knowing that hardening of the arteries, actual and mental arteries, can explain some of the oddities of old age. But the tragic thing is to find in some one still young, young enough to be my grandson, some of the defeatist attitude that made the old gentleman a perpetual illustration of people who live beyond their years or beyond their ability to adjust. When a young person gives up the struggle before the mature years have come, that is tragic. Think of the long misery he has ahead, what with the ability of modern science to lengthen life. As a recorder of folk ways, I fear for the time and place where young people become old before their time, too early to be endured by their relatives and friends.

DEEP SNOWS

As I write this article, a freezing rain, which has already lasted for nearly twenty-four hours, is loading the trees with glistening ice. Warnings over the radio plead for caution in driving if people just must get out into the weather. And yet I have seen many worse ice storms. "Here goes an old man's memory," I expect some of you to say. But this old man has kept records of weather since he was a very young man and is not to be ridiculed too easily when he speaks of weather, good or bad. However, many of the ice storms did not occur when I lived at Fidelity, the time when many of the memories I write about were realities. One was only six years ago and was the worst I have ever known in the more than a half of century of watching the weather. Then what does the broadcasting company mean by calling atention again and again to a fair-sized ice storm such as older people have seen the like of many times?

When those storms of snow or ice or rain used to come, away back at Fidelity, I did not know as many people as now live on ~~the~~ my street. Each house was stocked with home-grown food enough to weather ice storms or snow storms or floods. It is true that the mail might not get to Fidelity, but that would only delay our reading the installments of our favorite tear-jerkers in COMFORT and AMERICAN WOMAN. And I never saw it too bad for neighbors to trudge across the fields or woods to pay a visit and thaw out at the side or front of a big roaring fire.

Now, of course, we are a very closely-knit people, dependent upon transportation beyond anything we once could have dreamed. Formerly, if the snow was pretty deep, we could ride a horse, as my father did in the famous "Deep Snow" of 1886. Now a small snow increases driving hazards until many timid ones, like me, prefer to let the family car stay in the garage; even we oldsters prefer to venture out on foot rather than run the gauntlet of any street or highway. Imagine scattering salt

on some of the country roads that I used to know at Fidelity!

When I taught my last country school, away back in 1909-10, a freak snow of eighteen inches depth forced me to disband my school for the rest of the week. That much snow made it a bit unhandy for short-legged children to get anywhere, but nobody was killed in a car wreck, nobody starved to death from lack of transportation on the highways. The reason was simple: there were no cars to cause a wreck, and there was practically no overland transportation except by railroad. The trains came through, a bit late but not too late to bring the few necessities that everybody had to add to stores raised on the farm.

Only four years ago, very early in the winter, I started to go by bus to Nashville early one Saturday morning. I finally arrived there after noon, for a two-inch snow on smooth highways had paralyzed traffic. I saw a dozen or so cars standing on every part of a car, where they had slid off the road, and I was told that most of the wrecks had already been towed in. One large bus had sat at the top of the big hill above Goodlettsville all night and until far into the morning, for the driver was afraid to risk starting down. The smooth hard-surfaced roads soon had become slippery and dangerous; our liking of modern things had backfired. It would have brought many a word of criticism if that big hill had not been as smooth as a parlor floor; now it was even smoother, and still we griped.

François Villon asked, quite naively, "Where are the snows of yesteryear?" Whether they were big or little, even the worst ones did not pose such a problem as a mere ground-coverer does now. Traffic has to move or die. There can be no wait as in the good old days when "nobody wasn't going nowhere nohow."

"KEEPING UP WITH LIZZIE"

I am now in the first half of my fiftieth year as a teacher. Much water has flowed over and through the dam in that time. There were no county high schools when I began teaching; and there were very few of any kind, even though several academies proudly called themselves colleges. A very large percentage of the people in Kentucky were meagerly educated in 1907, when I taught my first one-room school. There were literally thousands who could not even read and write their own names. An actual college graduate was about as likely to appear in any given community as a wild buffalo straight from the plains. All this is recorded history rather than an old man's fuzzy memories.

In spite of the wonder I have always felt for the strides by which our state has risen in education, especially in statistics, I still wonder more at the numerous fads we have lived through in our effort to make our schools everything but places of intellectual growth and development. Just about every one of the fifty years of my professional life somebody has suggested something new to add to our curriculum as a life-saver for our democracy. Most of these things are good, especially if we had forty years to introduce them to our schools and could keep children until they were middle-aged. The continuous noise made in our magazines and newspapers about Johnny and his reading has considerable foundation in fact, though the man who did most of the howling probably knows less of actual conditions than any primary teacher in our state. After we discount all of his opinionated pronouncements about popular education, we must admit that we have not wrought as many wonders in our schools as the tax-payers would appreciate, and we have not taught as many Johnnies to read and enjoy reading as we might have. In our fear that we would not get on the most recent bandwagon, we have often taught the frills of school

and left off the fundamentals. Of course, there are many so-called educators who feel that we are doing well if we get our youngsters so they can be happy with one another, whether they can read or spell or count to a hundred. Social adjustment was and is a big part of life itself, I well know. Much good has been done to develop a new democracy among the generations that have gone to school since I opened my small one-room school in 1907. But are the fathers and mothers, the tax-payers themselves, satisfied with Johnny's social adjustment when he does not have enough actual learning to justify the long years he has spent in the grades and high school or even college?

We used to talk about "keeping up with Lizzie" or "keeping up with the Joneses." After all, a good deal of our lives are like that, for good or ill. My old car is shabby beside yours; I must have a new one. My children do not have enough gadgets to make life miserable for themselves and the neighbors; I must buy them some useless stuff to make them feel equal to their friends. But how about school? Are we to feel that it is wholly a matter of staying around a number of years and getting a permanent honorable discharge in the form of a diploma of some sort? No matter how many years a boy goes to school, is that any measure of what he knows unless he has learned how to read and think? A diploma from a big-name college or high school looks good and may have some value. Business men like to think so, and who am I to discourage them? When I see boys pass by mathematics and science as if they were poisonous, I wonder whether we may not be losing the race with Russia. If we are to keep up with the Joneses, I would like to know just who these Joneses are, anyway. It is satisfying to an elderly teacher to find that just plain people are asking the same question, after all these years: "Are our children learning what schools are supposed to teach?"

TASTING THE LANDSCAPE

Nearly every day I find myself somewhat out of tune with a speed-mad world that does not have time to taste a landscape or do anything else that subtracts from the period for dashing away toward some elusive and maybe unimportant goal. We are in too much of a hurry. No amount of warning seems to lessen our wrecks in number or violence. Some wit said recently that we break our necks to get somewhere so that we can get started back sooner.

We make up for this a little by traveling in vacation time to places as far away as we can see and get back before our work starts. Hosts of the people whom I have seen at state and national parks were surprised at themselves for liking plain looking and breathing. Many of them, I fear, would not have spent an hour looking at their own landscapes or even imagining that these same views were worth seeing. Not all of us can live where we can look out a picture window and see landscapes that would have made some of the old painters envious. I have been in a few homes where such views were the daily fare. My own office window looks out upon a view that is about as pretty as can be found in the state or at least in the less wild parts of the state. But there is no monopoly of such views; thousands of people have but to look out of their windows to realize how an artist would revel in what is daily food for us.

For almost a half century I have been trying to get at the heart of the scenes around me; I am still in the early stages of knowing why my hills and my river and my fields and my town, none of them famous or widely known, are still so thrilling. My winding river, cutting through the outlying eastern edge of the Ozarks, which we call the Western Coalfields, is a relatively small stream, but it is as large as the Tiber and many another river famous in history. All it lacks is some poet who can see it in its importance and make us all see.

When I lived back at Fidelity, it was thought to be sissy to love beauty or to say anything about it. Often we were told that loving things of earth was idolatry. Many a beauty-hungry person I have known was afraid that there might be something downright wicked in finding a lasting satisfaction in our simple landscapes. Not long ago I stood at the site of my old house where I spent my first eighteen years and was greatly pleased that the landscapes were far from being dull or prosaic. I tried very hard to keep sentiment out of my view of the range of gravelly hills and the winding creek in the foreground. Since these were my daily fare, I have lived a long time, in other surroundings. I have grown from a stripling to a middle-aged man. But it gave me a secret satisfaction to feel that the landscape that was mine so long ago is still there, still inspiring, still capable of making a worshiper of the wild out of any one who looks.

Long after cars had come into use but before I had been able to own one, I got off the train at Murray one day in vacation and was delighted that my older brother had driven a wagon to the town that day and was hoping that I would ride back home with him. He apologized for his humble conveyance, as if I should have been met in the most recent model of automobiles. I assured him that nothing would suit me better than to go back to Fidelity in a wagon, so I could drink in the scenes of my earliest remembrance. It took us about an hour for each three miles of the twelve-mile journey. I renewed my acquaintance with many a place that I had almost forgotten, places that are now off the state highway and rapidly fading out of my memory again. I was able to recreate the olden times of making the thrilling ride to the county seat and back again, a much-traveled youngster. I literally tasted the landscape that afternoon; the trip is the one I best rrmember of all the ones that I took over that road and have taken over its paved and straighter successor. I am glad that I had this experience before wagons went out of style and while there was still time enough to anticipate every bend in that dusty, winding road.

T+C 3/18

A TOUCH OF SADNESS

Nearly every day I am made slightly sad because I have to explain some once-common expression or attitude, whereas it was not too long ago that my students and I spoke the same language. Ordinary references in the most ordinary reading seem to many of my students like words or expressions in another lahguage. It is not necessarily the fault of the students; our language has changed so fast, to keep up with our complex age, that it takes a deal of backing and turning to make it fit everyday occasions. I do not object to its changing any more than I object to other changes in our lives; the thing that makes me sad is that the younger student may never know what he has missed by not having felt older forms of speech and attitude as well as the current ones.

Here is a case in point. Almost any poem of American literature in the periods my students study is based on some common Scriptural idea or even obvious expression. Apparently it is no longer fashionable for youngsters to know a Bible reference, for very commonplace ones have to be explained laboriously. Many of them students, however, though they may know the Twenty-third Psalm and its beautiful imagery about sheep, know nothing about sheep. Sometimes it takes longer to explain the symbol than to read the actual poem or prose passage. Similarly, references to classical names or events fall pretty flat, for fairly few people know that there ever was, in song and story, a Troy or a Helen, a Homer or a Vergil, a Venus or a Diana. Don't misunderstand me: I am not saying that there cannot be excellent poetry that does not echo Biblical or classical phraseology or ideas. But it is still true that many of our tenderest and best poems could never have been but for the poet's intimate acquaintance with the lore of ancient times.

Maybe it is even more a matter of regret that words of our ordinary life and mores are passing so fast that my youngsters and I speak

different languages. The words connected with the farm as it was a half century ago or with the schools of that time or with politics or social life or clothes--just about every kind of word has to be reevaluated when younger and older people converse, assuming that this relationship will continue to exist. Sometimes I feel that I should be introduced to my students by a skillful scholar whose knowledge of language is far beyond anything that any of us know. He could know past, and present, and, clairvoyantly, future ways of saying things and could thus bridge the gap between generations.

But let us look at the matter a little more sensibly. After all, the average freshman of 1956-57 was born in 1938. He was too young to recall the beginning of our part of World War II or recalls it only vaguely, assisted by the memories of older people. He was only twelve years old when the Korean War started, an age that is not often aware of world-shaking events. Social Security, Income Tax, regular Air Service anywhere--these have been as much taken for granted as you and I of an older time took horses and buggies and a very shut-in world, ~~for granted.~~ When I was eighteen, I could remember having sat in rooms lighted by tallow candles; I wore home-knit yarn socks; I was washing my grimy hands with home-made lye soap; I had never seen an automobile, not to mention an airplane. There was not then a county high school in the state and precious few independent ones. A college graduate would have been as rare a sight as a giraffe or an elephant. Learning the ever new and newer words as they come along is fine on me, for I used to know the other ones; but it is hard work for a youngster to be compelled to go back to what is now gone and try to feel in strange old words a thrill that even newer ones do not often bring. Of course, I know that this will profit the student, but sometimes it is hard to convince him that people who wore funny clothes and had never been anywhere had anything valuable to say.

HOW LEGENDS START

Recently I have had my freshmen give brief speeches about their home neighborhoods or towns. In the talks there have appeared a number of funny evidences of how legends get started. Remember that my freshmen, as I said last week, are eighteen or so in age; their memories run back only a short way as compared with those of us older people. They often get Revolutionary War and Mexican War and Civil War and even World War I heroes badly scrambled.. It is not unusual for one to mention Abraham Lincoln as if he were wholly contemporary with Woodrow Wilson or George Washington. And their geography, especially areas they have never visited, gets some fine scrambling, too. New England and Virginia, Louisiana and California, Texas and Alaska become pretty near neighbors. Of course, I gently, sometimes laughing, try to set the youngsters straight on their history and geography, but I must say that I appreciate the experience of seeing legends start, much as they started long ago.

There has been so much nonsense about Davy Crockett in our time that it is possible to have hundreds of stories told of him that were authentic of times long before or long after his time on earth. If you once have a folk hero, he draws to himself all that even remotely resembles his typical actions or stories or quaint expressions. A book published in 1956 summarizes many of the folk stories about Lincoln, most of which are as old as recorded history and, therefore, ages older than that. His awkward body, his keen sense of humor, his love of illustrative stories, his innate sadness--what better things could there be to start all over again the strange way humanity has of making its heroes fit ancient patterns? He was born so late in time that some of the myths of ancient days could not apply, but almost everything else that clusters around a hero has become a part of

the Lincoln legend.

Here is another oddity about folk legends. There are waves of them, accidentally fostered by changes in thinking. A century ago it was the prerogative of writers about our Founding Fathers to make them Supermen, almost too good and too wise to have been colonial Englishmen. They not only knew the wisdom of the ages; they were also prophets of everything that was ever to happen to America. Their deeds ranged all the way from the nauseating Mason Weems story of George and the Cherry tree to Jefferson's uncanny knowledge of architecture and democracy. Then we went through an age of debunking, when writers took a fiendish delight in showing that our heroes had been human rather than half-divine, with tempers and foibles even worse. It was almost a breathless wait between one bdbunking volume and another, for we loved to find plain and even depraved humanity in the men who started this America of ours. We got so interested in this game of uncovering dirt that we lost sight of the dirt still around us and were victims of collecting folk dirt from all sources and piling it around our former great men's memories, forgetting that we were merely repeating, on a slightly different scale, what people have always done with folk heroes. And then we have now gone into another phase of this folk conception of our heroes, leaving them still with plenty of human characteristics but glorifying their one or two good qualities, sometimes too much, until we wonder whether Davy Crockett and Mike Fink and Washington and the rest were not actually Hollywood born and bred rather than flesh-and-blood people of earlier times. The folk hero just cannot be normal; he must be above or below us, a demi-god or a demi-devil. The historian has a hard job to separate the wheat and the chaff and still present our great ones in any appealing way. Did Mike Fink shoot off an Indian's heel? Did Lincoln almost lose his mind because of the death of Anne Rutledge? Did Washington kneel in the snow and pray at Valley Forge? Prove it first and then try to get the folk to believe the actual history of it all.

4/1

CHILDISH FEARS

"And right by the pump in the pasture lot
He showed us a hole that a Wunk has got.".

All who remember Riley's"Raggedy Man" will recognize the words used above, for they reveal that little Jim Riley was very much like little Gordon Wilson and little Joe Doak: we were afraid of things and were willing to believe almost anything that a raggedy man or any one else told us. In fact, my childhood, probably like yours, was a general mixture of joys and fears. I was almost afraid to be happy for fear something would get me, again like the "gobble-uns" of Riley's "Orphant Annie." When I saw a hole in the ground, I feared that something would run out and bite me: I was much more afraid of the idea than of an actual animal, even a snake. When the animal appeared in person, as you might say, I accepted it for what it as an animal was worth; but who knew what fearful monsters might be lurking in some hole in a pasture lot?

Many sentimentalists refuse to admit that they as children were almost afraid of their shadows. Like Mason Weems's George Washington (but probably not too much like the original flesh-and-blood American hero), I cannot tell a lie: I was afraid from my earliest days of whatever was unseen and maybe unknown. Noises in the night were most scary, for the animal or bird giving them was not visible, and maybe it was not anything with a body, anyway. It took me many a year to regard an owl's notes in the same way that I regarded a Cardinal's notes, as a call note or song of a bird, whether it was in sight or not. When our house dogs would suddenly start up and bark rather apprehensively at some sound that was beyond my ears, I felt my own hair rising on the back of neck as it did on the neck of our pet. What he was hearing I did not and do not know; it might have been spooks. Anyway, it did not pay to trifle with anything invisible.

And then there were ordinary phenomena like weather. A thunder storm frightened me almost into hysterics, and a stormy wind just about used up all my resistance to things unknown and unseen. I was told all sorts of scary tales about how lightning had struck here and there, and I could see for myself trees not too far from our house that had been scalped by the freakish lightning. I tumbled into a featherbed with full assurance that I would be safe, but a louder peal of thunder made me doubt my wisdom in trying to escape the inevitable. Our little creek, ordinarily pretty small and poetic, could go on a mighty rampage after a heavy thundershower. It had and has a wide overflow area, so that it seemed that Noah's times might return. Though we lived on a small hill far above any water since prehistoric geological times, I looked at that stream and feared a return of the Johnstown Flood that I had heard about or the later Galveston Flood. A particularly brilliant sunset when I was a small boy made my flesh crawl, for I had been told at Sulphur Springs Church about signs of the end of all things, and I was afraid that the jig was up for me and for the whole fair world. Of course, I did not tell anybody about this; I would have been laughed at, and that would not have helped my puzzle over the universe. One of our neighbors loved to set fire to the woods every fall, to burn up the ticks, he said. He was, obviously, "teched in the head," but that did not keep me from fearing a universal conflagration when I could see the small hills outlined with flames as night would come on. If a fire could run to the top of those little hills, what was to keep it from spreading all over the world? Again I kept my fears to myself, and suffered.

You have probably agreed with some of my early neighbors that I was queer, maybe minus a few marbles. Don't be too cock-sure. Were you ever so afraid that you forgot to eat, forgot to sleep, forgot that Mother and Father were at hand to keep away all sorts of bad things? Did you ever cover up head and ears with a jeans quilt on a hot night to keep invisible things from making a meal of you? If you can remember well, try to think what you were like.

"Red in Tooth and Claw"

Tennyson, in IN MEMORIAM, speaks of "Nature red in tooth and claw," probably feeling that this side of nature is the most obvious one, the side that is least like our better human actions. As a child I did not know Tennyson, except for "Sweet and Low" and "The Bugle Song," but I had a great fear of the bloody phases of animal life around me. As I said last week, I did not mention these things often, for they merely provoked a laugh from older people. It was just another thing to brood over and suffer over.

My career as a trapper began and ended the same day. I had seen deadfalls of various sorts and wanted one. My older brother made me one out of some broken tobacco sticks and a home-made trigger. Soon I had caught a Mourning Dove. My first impulse was a sort of savege triumph: "Lookee, I've caught a Dove." I seized it and ran to the house. Mother told me to wring its neck and pick it, and she would cook it for me. Right there I lost all my savage glee; I wanted most of all to turn the captive loose. Mother did not share my sentiments and soon disposed of the Dove, very much as she would have wrung the neck of a frying-sized chicken. She cooked it, too, but I would not tough the carcass of the late beautiful bird. Nobody had given me that point of view, so far as I know; it just bobbed up. Some other member of my family ate the Dove; my trapping days were over.

But familiarity breeds contempt, I have always heard. I had no compunctions then or ever about seeing a chicken lose its head and appear in the form of drumsticks and pulley bones for my special delight. I could wring a chicken's neck with all the aplomb of a Medieval knight butchering a host of enemy women and children. And I took my place in the hog killings as soon as I was allowed around. Seeing a fat porker shot down with an old hog rifle seemed a matter of course; cutting the fat fellow's throat with a butcher knife was

merely the next step toward sausage and spare ribs and the rest.

Only once in my life have I witnessed the strange clan call of cattle that smelled the blood of one of their own number. Once Father and we boys slaughtered a calf out in the edge of the pasture. After we had disposed of the meat by peddling it around the neighborhood, we casually turned the cows into that same field. I can still hear that wild bellow of one of our cows when she smelled that blood and can still see her galloping wildly over the pasture as if possessed ~~with~~ of an evil spirit. I can recall only John Burroughs as writing anything of this weird bellowing and wild acting.

It has often occurred to me how intimately we were once connected with our domesticated animals, so much so that butchering seemed like a form of homicide. I have seen many a child cry himself into hysterics because his pet pig had now grown into a valuable hog and was ready to be butchered and salted down. With our meat coming to us from an impersonal packing house, we miss the strange heartbreak that all former farm people suffered, even the ones that seemed the most callous.

It would be too soft for me to forget that I was sometimes annointed to act as executioner of unwanted puppies and kittens or even more mature animals. After beating a cat's head into pulp with a stovewood stick and still having the animal run away, I almost was a believer in the nine-lives theory. One of my schoolmates once made our hair rise when he told how Bubbah, his older brother, had executed an unwanted cat and that the cat's ghost came back and scratched him that night. I never suffered any such misfortune, but I suspect that I walked or ran away from the place of execution entirely too fast for decorum. Again, let me warn you readers not to form too hasty a judgmet until you have recalled how folkish you were when you came into contact as children with such fearful things as blood and death.

T+C 4/15

ECHOES OF LONG AGO

It is spring again, and many a person is renewing his faith in the power of the soil to bring forth abundantly and to give animal life food and to spare. A very common form of this ancient faith manifests itself in the work around the garden. Somehow this minor part of farm life, as our hired men used to see it, is the very heart of man's triumph over the dangers of starvation. No wonder the Chippewa Indians had as their most memorable myth the origin of corn as a gift of the gods through their tribal hero Hiawatha. Corn meant present food and future food alike; a source of food so convenient and so good as corn meant that there could be some sort of permanent establishment and not so much of the painful, prolonged wandering in search of something to eat. Corn meant roasting ears and hard, flinty grains, too, to be pounded in a hominy hole and made into cakes to be baked on coals or in the ashes themselves. And even the Indians had other vegetables in their gardens: squashes or some form of pumpkin, beans, and ~~[illegible]~~ potatoes. With a reasonable success as trappers or hunters, there would be meat to go with bread and vegetables, and famine would be chased away. Your ancestors and mine, like the Indians, had learned how to domesticate plants and make them yield abundantly, even with the primitive methods of agriculture then known. Most of our vegetables arose as domesticated plants so long ago that it is not often that the original plant in wild nature can be found. Only some kindred plants may now be on earth; but for the care bestowed upon our food plants ages ago, before written history, we might not even have them today. And so, as I see the annual breaking and planting of the garden, I seem to see a whole line of gardeners, from the most primitive to the most modern. In the open furrow are strewed the magic seeds, prophets of abundant meals and joyous feasts. It must have taken a lot of faith on the part of the first gardener to consign perfectly

edible seeds to the soil, when they could have been eaten as they were. Imagine, too, the fear that these precious seeds would feed some hungry mouse or other wild creature and never know the joy of developing a full-grown plant and carrying on the endless series of seedtime and harvest and cold and heat and summer and winter.

Planting a garden is a whole series of rites, many of them hallowed by family tradition that may run back into hazy centuries. Peas must be planted thus, beans in a slightly different way, and potatoes in still another one. Some of the smallest seeds must be first started in a hotbed or other forcing place, to give them a head start against worms and cold nights and animal enemies. Some must be planted early, as early as the ground can be worked; other types must wait until Good Friday or until oak leaves are as big as mouse's ears. And some must be protected against the weather, even when they are to grow directly ~~from the seed~~ in the open. Ages of learning have gone into this planting and care of the garden.

And the warm sunshine does its part, and the plants come up and start their career. Man learned early to thin some plants to make the others produce better. This rite always hurt my feelings, for I hated to cut down the little stalk of corn in order to give the big one a better start. I was the little fellow on our farm, and I sometimes--unwisely, from the farmer's point of view--looked around to see that nobody was looking and cut the larger stalk instead. It took me a half century to be brave enough to tell this, for I might have been spanked even down to middle age. It does seem a bit sad to sow the seeds and then to waste some of them. Again, primitive man must have been done some strange thinking to arrive at thinning out his precious plants after they had started growing and promising a store of food. But patient working the garden assured a civilized outlook, when man could count on staying in some spot for a while and developing his own acres. "A garden is a lovely thing, God wot."

T+C

EXCHANGING GARDEN SEEDS

Last week I paid my annual tribute to the garden and its keeper. Today I want to record for the younger generation a folkish custom that is not wholly dead but is so far gone that many younger people may never have known it. I refer to exchanging seeds of vegetables and flowers. I cannot remember when there were not seeds brought on at our stores at Fidelity, but these represented only a part of our annual planting. From some source we had a stock of beans or peas or potatoes or some other vegetable that had produced well or that had had a fine flavor. The neighbors heard of this and offered to exchange something for a "start" of our fine vegetable. Father, the country doctor, often came in from a long ride bringing a bag of seeds or some plants ready to be transplanted to our garden. One of his patients had told him about the plant and had, in a typically neighborly way, supplied him from the garden where the plant had done so well. Sometimes we even attached the name of the giver to the plant and often kept the stock indefinitely, the Montgomery beans, or the Smith lettuce, or the Sanders watermelons. And, likewise, the Wilson this or that traveled all over the community, until anybody's garden was a sort of composite of everything anybody knew.

And we were equally fond of exchanging flower seeeds and cuttings. Two of the families in our immediate area had fine flower gardens and even pits in which the flowers could be kept over the winter. Both had an abundance of everything that would grow in pots or out in the open. We got geranium cuttings and bulbs of all sorts and seeds and started a flower garden or added to the ones we already had. Long ago, in FIDELITY FOLKS, I mentioned the gracious old lady who, as a very young woman, had brought, all the way from central North Carolina, a huge gourd crammed with flower and garden seeds and even bulbs from her flower garden. Around her house grew the descendants of these seeds and bulbs and roots, and my own flower garden was

literally filled with supplies from her garden. Johnquils we called them, but the books, we knew, called them daffodils. By whatever name we knew them, they had traveled all the way from the far-away home of our elderly neighbor and represented beauty in a new wilderness home far from the settled and more permanent-looking aspects of a place long developed. But by my time this home in the wilderness was old and a picture of loving care of decades of concern with home-like surroundings. I, too, lived at Fidelity long enough to pass on some of the plants and seeds and bulbs and roots that grew from these ancient stocks. I have often wished, in a sort of poetic dream, that I could see all the descendants of this treasure-house gourd that brought life and beauty into a new place.

On my father's old home place in southern Middle Tennessee there was an apple tree, probably a mere seedling, or "volunteer," when one of my ancestors bought some of his farm from a Pennsylvania German named Bodenhammer. Father liked the memory of this ancient tree so much that, once when he was visiting in his old home, he cut some twigs of the tree and brought them some two hundred miles back to our home near Fidxlity. Father, like many another man of my early years, was a sort of jack-of-all-trades. One of his hobbies was grafting and budding fruit trees. On a seedling of some sort he grafted several of his Bodenhammer apple twigs. One, at least, lived and thrived. And all my childhood I loved the strange, tangy taste of that tree's apples. Somehow it seemed more poetic than any other tree, though I liked the fruit of all. Whether there was any genuine merit in that tree and its fruit I do not even want to know. It was our tree, Father's tree, and Grandfather's and Great-grandfather's, and so on, away back to the late seventeen-hundreds, when the family first came from North Carolina after the Revolution to make a new home in Middle Tennessee. It would be good to know how far that mere chance tree on an ancestral place may have spread; I regret that some nursery specialist did not see the apple and develop the true Bodenhammer strain.

THE ODD SCHOOL PICTURE

In a very recent issue of the MURRAY DEMOCRAT there appeared a reprint of a school picture of New Concord School--my Fidelity--taken in 1901 or 1902. Even I cannot remember which year it was, since we had the same teacher for part of 1901 and all of 1902. Anyway, there are twenty-six youngsters and their big man teacher. And, on the back row, dressed up in coat and vest and tie and stiff collar, am I, chubby of face and looking cross-eyed at the camera, as I always do and did.

A number of reflections have grown out of that old picture. First of all, there were just twenty-six pupils present, when I know there were probably fifty enrolled. Attendance in those days was far from perfect. There are only twelve boys, every one of them younger than I was. Just what was keeping the other children at home that day so long ago I do not know. I am sure that there would have been many more on hand if they had known that the itinerant photographer was coming, for Picture Day and Treat Day were big events, at Fidelity and elsewhere.

Of course, the thing that gave me the biggest pang was to see the ones who had to give up the struggle long ago. Just about the brightest girl of them all died of tuberculosis before she was twenty. In those days T. B. was our greatest enemy at Fidelity. If I were to list the names of people whom I knew who died of this dread disease, you would think that I was reared in a sanitarium. Some of the others have succumbed to the ordinary ravages of age: arthritis, deafness, defective eyes, even death itself. Even some of the littlest ones that I knew then are grandparents, and some of the ones near my own age are great-grandparents.

And here is a strange thing: nearly a third of the group are childless. The old basic yeomanry of Fidelity has died out partly because there were no replacements in the ranks. Probably another third have only one child each. Only one of the entire group kept up the old tradition of the big

family. At a funeral of one of my family some years ago she introduced me to her eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth children--about as good-looking and lively a group as I can recall ever seeing.

And America has become the home of the group. Fidelity can claim but few of them, alive or dead. Texas, California, Detroit, and other far places became the homes of these remote country children. A few are today solid citizens of Fiddelity, mere remnants of the group that I knew more than a half century ago. So far as I know, not one of them ever finished college, though several "went off to school." I have given the commencement addresses for several descendants of the group, and I have been told that many of these high school children have established themselves in college work, even to graduation and advanced degrees.

In general, these country children were from good, honest, orderly homes. Only one of the boys ever ran afoul of the law, so far as I have known. Some great personal tragedies have befallen some of them, like being left widows with several children, and even living on relief. But a large percentage, ~~however,~~ have been able to make their own way in the world, and some have become rather well-to-do citizens. Some of the brightest and best children were from tenant families. Those same children have done well financially and are in no way distinguished from the ones from the farms on which they spent their childhood. Caste systems did not obtain at Fidelity then or now. You were what you were, like Popeye.

Among your own faded souvenirs of your childhood you may have some such picture, a relic of a time long gone. If this analysis of my own picture has made you see again the boys and girls of your one-roomed school, I have not written this nostalgic little essay in vain.

"WHAT DO YOU KNOW?"

Just now I answered the telephone. It was one of my former students, a teacher in the grades, who wanted to know some new approach to teaching plain grammar to youngsters. I gladly gave my advice, for I have never ceased to teach grammar, since the first day I started my professional career in 1907. And this former student of mine was eager to tell me how she found her pupils glad to know the names of things, to be asked to find nouns and verbs and adjectives. I thanked her for giving me a lift at the end of a tiresome day. I, too, have been trying to teach some of the basic principles of grammar, the "very bones of language," as this student of mine called them. And sometimes I find that many students, even from high schools that have big reputations, do not know a noun from a verb and look puzzled at me when I mention such strange things. But these same ones look puzzled at the mention of some state across the Mississippi River or in distant New England. I suppose that if I were to start out some day on some semi-primary subject like physiology, I would really get some stony looks. Spelling, in many parts of the world, is a losing game, a decadent art. I have found one student, at least, this year who cannot spell the name of his own county. Now, all this sounds like the ravings of an elderly man who toed the planks in the country school in a spelling match or who could name the states and tell their capitals and do a lot of other unnecessary work. Yes, you are about right.

What I am leading up to is that knowledge for itself seems to be on the defensive. Fortunately, there are some who still cherish the acquirement of learning, even though not everybody like these can receive national attention because of highly-paid quiz shows. I know a good many people who have their heads stored with what the practical world thinks is foolish knowledge, but these keepers of the stores of knowledge have lots of fun with being able, say, to travel entirely across America

and visit every state without crossing any state line twice. Or some of these freaks might be able to name all our Presidents and give their dates of service, or(horrors!) name every English monarch from "William the Norman, then William his son," on down to Elizabeth the Second, "God bless her." These are merely illustrations of what I mean by useless knowledge.

Personally, it has been lots of fun to major in such nonsense. I used to memorize the table of contents of my readers; that helped me, I suppose, to be able to name every one of the 130 people now in my classes. Useless information? Sure. Just this week I was asked to recommend a student whom I have known only on the campus but have never had in class. But we walked across the campus together many, many times; I came to know many things about him. I realize that I do not have very technical knowledge about him, but the employing board that asked me wanted to know about his general good manners, his ability to meet and know people, his appearance. I think I know something about these things.

Again, I do not want to be forever reminding you of Fidelity and its philosophies. But we learned facts then, lots of them: unrelated facts, big facts, little facts, unnecessary facts. I liked them. At the time I just liked them for themselves, with no notion that they could ever do me any good. I have made few dollars with these facts, but they have saved me miles of walking to look them up in reference books; they have also helped me, "oft in the stilly night," call up events and slogans and long-dead people who have helped mould our ideas. Along with these facts I learned thousands of lines of Bible verses and poems; every day I find myself falling back on some of these. It was once thought silly to know many things; the T. V. programs have intensified the urge to know just for the sake of knowing. By the way, what cape lies at the southern extremity of Africa, and what are the names of the bones in the ear?

T+C

RUSHING THE SEASON

It seems that we members of the human race have a hard time learning anything new. Right now it is Blackberry Winter, a cool spell that always comes around every spring and makes us wonder whether we did not rejoice a bit too early that winter was over. It seems plain laziness to wait about planting corn, for instance, when the weather is getting warmer and warmer and oak leaves are as big as mouse's ears. And many a farmer around here has wasted his good hybrid seed corn by refusing to remember that it pays to wait until proper weather to plant crops. Many a field, doubtless, will have to be replanted, and hybrid seed corn is expensive.

I can recall how hard it was for farmers at Fidelity to learn that the seasons down there were not in every way identical with those in North Carolina, where nearly everybody had come from. One year some would-be early bird planted corn, at least some corn, in late February. Just how well it did I cannot remember, but it was probably planted over a time or two. Whittier says in some of his historical sketches that his ancestors refused to believe in the New England winters and kept on trying to dress as people dressed back in Old England. Overcoats, for instance, were practically unknown. Chilblains were common as a result of not obeying American weather rather than English weather.

There has been such a wide range of changes in ways of living that it is not surprising that many people have a hard time adapting to new conditions. Weather varies somewhat, but there is a more observable consistency in it than many people like to admit. To say that there were some snowless winters in Grandpa's day or that there were summers then as hot and dry as some of our fairly recent ones would make Grandpa's addled memories seem inaccurate, and

that would never do. But, with modern methods of plowing and sowing and cultivating, it must take some adaptability on the part of farmers to come out even at the end of the season.

Nothing has made me wonder more than the very rapid change in medical science since I could first remember. If doctors were still bleeding their patients in the nineties and early nineteen-hundreds, think how far we have come since then? And remember that the patient has had to come along, too. No matter how much the doctor is revered, the patient has to submit to being shot and to taking pills. I cannot say that I have known people who went through all the practices from blister plasters to penicillin, but such things are possible. Only a small percentage of the people I knew at Fidelity had been vaccinated; we who had our scars proudly showed them, but the looks we got sometimes made us wonder whether we might not be punished for thwarting Providence. But, like the farmer whose father insisted on planting corn a month or six weeks too early merely because the ancestor planted corn then back in an earlier settlement, we cannot expect too much of people who revert, sometimes, to primitive ways of preserving health. I have always wanted to be empowered in some fashion to check on the patients who faithfully take their shots but who take no chances and also take teas prepared by some granny or even resort to some sort of charm to drive away disease. And I have sometimes wondered whether some of the drivers of fine cars may not have said some hocus-pocus to be sure they would arrive in one piece when they traveled. One highly-praised person of my acquaintance, drawing a big salary and always having attention publicly, would refuse to go on a journey if a black cat ran across his road, or he would go miles around by another road. Another one, well educated and plain rich, has never allowed herself to cross a ferry, no matter how far around a road with a bridge had to be taken. Maybe it is a bit too much to expect one to give up acting like Grandpa or some remoter ancestor.

SAYING A PIECE

In 1956 I rounded out my three hundredth commencement address. That event made me do some straight thinking about schools and about speaking in public. From the vantage ground of middle age and long experience, I want to talk today a bit about this game called speaking.

When we were very small, we learned pieces and said them on Friday afternoons after the last recess at school. We progressed from two or four lines to long-winded poems of good, bad, or doubtful worth. We little ones got the notion, somehow, that the greatest merit we could show was to trip over our piece as fast as we could, make our bows, and sit down. No amount of scolding by parents, older brothers and sisters, and teachers ever stopped this. Maybe the speed prevented stage fright. Some little fellows had such weak voices that the whole piece became a mere mumble. Others, like me, had such loud voices that eardrums suffered. Occasionally somebody forgot his piece and sat down in tears or was prompted by a relative or teacher. I have suffered few pains more severe than the ones caused by some little fellow's forgetting his lines. I was not to blame, but it seemed to me that everybody thought I was. But, slow or fast, weak or loud, this exercise banished a lot of fear of standing on one's feet and saying one's say.

Of course, when we got larger, we began to wish we could debate like some of our teachers, who would often stage a debate and invite in the whole neighborhood. And there were candidates by the dozen, all of whom had to show their ability as speakers as well as hand-shakers. Many of my pals wanted to be like this or that seeker for public office. And a good many of them tried, chiefly unsuccessfully, to be officers. You see, Fidelity,

was in the safe column, anyway, for, in spite of hot words during campaigns, everybody voted the straight ticket, come November. A man, then, was likely to be wasting his time and money to be running for a county office in our out of-the-way place.

At church, too, we heard speakers, ranging all the way from mere ranters to some pretty skilled speakers. Once in a blue moon a preacher said something besides bad words about the other denominations and was actually liked for it. Occasionally a visiting preacher would bring us some new angle of vision, some new figure of speech, some tolerance that we had not heard of before. Just as some listened to the politician and vowed to be an office-seeker, many a boy got a notion of greatness from a preacher that he heard. Farm life was so severe at Fidelity and the land was so well occupied already that it was necessary for us to scatter out and do something else besides farm Fidelity acres. The great Middle Western industrial boom was still a few years away; so it was hardly possible for my immediate generation of Fidelity youths to go North to a good job and a bright, shiny automobile. No wonder, then, that so many of us boys took our speaking seriously and came to make our living by depending upon it. School teachers and preachers were a dime a dozen at Fidelity in my childhood, and even today, when I look over the list of these two professions, it is amazing how many positions are filled by people from Fidelity, down to the newest addition to the school room or the church. Somehow trying to speak and keeping it up made a future history for lots of us boys from poor farms. And now, with more and more changes taking place in our lives, I am wondering whether any considerable number of replacements are around to keep up the distinctive contribution by Fidelity and other back-country areas that had little to offer in the way of soils or jobs.

WATERING THE HORSES

A daily rite that we former farm boys remember was as much a part of our lives then as our own regular meals; I refer to watering the horses. Some farms in our part of the world had no water supply except some wells; that meant drawing endless buckets of water for thirsty animals. A few farms had ponds that the horses could frequent as they desired. But our immediate area was blessed with several roadside springs and the creek that drained our small section. It became an event to round up the various animals and take them to the spring or creek, riding one of them bareback as the chief duty of the farm boy in charge. Sometimes other neighbor boys would be doing this chore at the same time as we. This gave us a chance to exchange news and gossip and even to have a horse race up the dusty road, safely out of sight of parents, who feared for our lives when we were out of their immediate presence. Sometimes the horses, which may have stood and shivered in the stable all day, were only too eager to work off a lot of energy. One old horse on our farm would take out after miscellaneous mules and colts, biting them fiercely when he got close enough. If I were riding this old jokester, it was all the more fun, for one of the other critters might show some dangerous heels, which could have hurt some spindle shanks belonging to the boy.

Somehow, however, the watering of the horses suggests more plainly another memory. All through our country, unlike the limestone country where I have lived since I was grown, there were small spring-fed streams, branches to us. Some of them just ran across the road, with no bridge or culvert; others were bridged, but there was a way around the bridge left for us to drive our horses and buggies to let Old Nell drink from the clear stream. A few days ago I drove over several of the Purchase counties and was reminded again of this watering custom.

The spring branches now flow under the modern highways with no sign except some painted posts to keep fast drivers from pulling too far out on the shoulders and plumping down into the branch. In some places the branches have been so completely rerouted that I was unable to recognize them; all the turns and kinks have been taken out; kinks and turns are out of harmony with modern highways. At one lone place I recognized the turnoff for the watering place and was brought back to the reality of days long gone.

Some years ago, while I was reading, for the nth time, Walton's COMPLEAT ANGLER(watch the spelling), I was brought to a sudden stop when I realized that most of the trout streams that wander through that perennial classic are now buried beneath the streets and buildings of London, mere drainage places, with all their piscatorial beauty gone. Some of them run through what are now slums, and the water in them is polluted by dirt and grime and street sweepings. Trout would not live long in their murky, smelly waters. And even the air above the hidden streams that sparkle in old Isaak's book is polluted with smoke and dust and grime. If the old fisherman were alive today, he would have to ride many a mile to reach such streams as those he fished in and made immortal.

BRAHMS AT FIDELITY

A few springs ago, when I spoke at the commencement at Fidelity High School, I was agreeably surprised to hear excellent rendition of Brahms and Handel, right in my own little corner of the world. I was told that the numbers I heard had rated high in local, regional, and state contests. All the time the music was going on, I was sitting on the stage, awaiting my part of the program and rejoicing that my own little village could hold up its head with the centers of population and could do its music as well as the best. That may seem strange to you; why shouldn't Fidelity do classic music if it wanted to? You are right, of course, but you forget how far Brahms and Handel and the rest were from the Fidelity I knew. We could have enjoyed any of them if they had been brought to us; they just weren't, and we had to put up with whatever we could get. We forget sometimes how hungry we might have been for the very things that so satisfy us in classic music; since we had never heard such, we did not exactly know the nature of our hunger, but the hunger itself was there.

I am just back from another commencement round in the same general area and am congratulating myself on having heard some more excellent music sung by country children and rendered so well that I believe that even a music critic would have applauded. As I so often tell my students, particularly the ones who imagine that they are too dumb to enjoy the best music, these country children to the end of their days will remember how they dressed up in their formals and sang real music, music that took the top rating of sophisticated critics from great colleges and great musical organizations. No amount of mere cheapness will ever quite displace this great experience.

Now we had music at Fidelity, some of it pretty good. Our voices were pretty harsh, but our spirits were willing. We did not sing

pianissimo; when we sang, we literally raised the roof. --Some of us stayed on the tune, but everybody was expected to raise his voice in song. Out of the miscellaneous musical education that we were getting, pretty badly scrambled education, some genuine values ultimately became evident. Those old church hymns, however poorly rendered, sank their message into our hearts, in stately, dignified tunes. Ballads, transmitted orally from the Old Country, made their mark, too. They tied us, unconsciously, with days long gone, with knights and ladies fair, with "old, unhappy, far-off things and battles long ago." Nobody seemed to know that there was any especial worth in ballads themselves; we just liked them and listened for the hundredth time to the same ones, year after year, as much impressed with "hard-hearted Barbary Allen" on the hundredth singing of the song as on the first. And there drifted into our corner of the universe popular songs, usually some time after they had become popular elsewhere, and thus we came to know of the loss of the Lady Elgin, the sinking of the battleship Maine, the love of an American soldier for a Filipino girl, and even "Ta, ra, ra, boom-de-ay." Some of our Sunday School songs were new then and now have become as nearly classic church music as the hymns of Watts and the Wesleys. Fanny J. Crosby was still alive and writing, her songs full of a faith that we early associated with her blindness and her clear eyes of faith.

But we needed some of the classics that now have come, along with the neighborhood high school and the well-trained musician from the nearby college, with its high-class department of music. I would not want to give up the folk music I heard or the droned church songs, but I wish I could have had, as these younger ones are having, a touch of Brahms and Handel and Chopin and Sibelius and other musicians, whose compositions, rendered with instruments or human voices, now form a part of the musical, normal life of so many children.

CHAUCER AND I

As I came back home from a commencement address in late May of this year, I was suddenly reminded of Chaucer and his pilgrims and their long, long journey to Canterbury. The Jefferson Davis Memorial, at Fairview, is almost exactly as far from Bowling Green as Canterbury is from the heart of old London, about 55 miles. Chaucer's pilgrims, riding little horses not much bigger than Shetland ponies, made this long journey in three and a half days, making about the same time that emigrants along the Oregon Trail were to make centuries later with their ox wagons. A deal of stopping to eat and drink had to be done; you could hardly expect to make too many miles with food and horses to take up so much time. Some of the pilgrims had their own cook, for they did not take very kindly to the sort of food that public places served. And, undoubtedly, a good deal of time was consumed in the leisurely alighting at the taverns and the getting away in the morning. But those same pilgrims could have walked the distance in much less time than their horses did. We boys who used to follow ordinary plows from early morning until sunset could have walked to Canterbury or anywhere else with the energy we expended in plowing. But, to get back to the similar distances! I was in no particular hurry and am no speed fiend, but in about an hour and a quarter I was at my own house. My Chevvy had turned over a few wheels' distances, and there I was!

And I got to thinking about then and now. I wonder whether I got to see much of the country I passed through. I have been along that road so many times that I know just about every fence post and yard gate and horse pond, but no one time gave me that intimate knowledge of the Bowling Green to Fairview section of U. S. 68. Chaucer and his group, poking along on their ponies, had time to tell some mighty good yarns, to sample the food and drink of every roadside joint, to make themsleves a part of the landscape; I hurried from a speaking engagement to an examination of my freshmen. To each his own, I suppose is

the way to look at it.

Maybe it is not advisable for us to know our territory as one could know it in those times. Things were not hurried then; life moved along so smoothly that people probably got time to do some more meditating than we do when we drive along much-traveled highways. Our boundaries have been so extended that no one person could know very definitely all the quaint things at every bend or turn of the road. Probably, if you know one turn or bend well, you can guess at the others.

This semester, as always in the fall and spring, I have again introduced my sophomores to Thoreau and his WALDEN. It comes as a surprise to them that Walden Pond is so small, that Thoreau's territory is merely a small division of a fair-sized county in Massachusetts. But who else, except Gilbert White of Selborne, ever knew so well a small plot of ground, knew it so well that thousands of people go to see it because he saw it first? Maybe there was and is some sense in taking a slow way through life, even today.

There is no danger, of course, in our going back to Chaucer's poky way of getting anywhere, especially after we have known the way to get there faster. But it is well to remember that people lived then, that they had to adjust to what was around them, that they met most of the same problems that face us now. And, with it all, some of them gave memorable expression to their views of life, views that are still alluring after ages have passed. Maybe, when younger generations dash across any earthly landscape in a matter of minutes, some of them will pause long enough to wonder how we of this time could possibly have had any uplifting thoughts when we got over the ground a mere sixty miles an hour. Maybe, too, some rare one will wish he could have shared, just once, such a leisurely time, before everything had got into such a towering hurry.

MONKEY'S EYEBROW TO WASHINGTON

In a group of high school students who were listening to me in May there was one from Monkey's Eyebrow, Kentucky. Don't imagine that I am making up names; just look at your official highway map of Kentucky, and you will find the actual name, on a state highway, away down in the far-western part of the state. After all, what is funnier about such a name than about many another name on our state map? But I am not going to talk about names, however interesting they may be.

At that same commencement I met an elderly man from another place no larger than Monkey's Eyebrow, an old schoolmate of mine, who asked me about one of our friends of long ago. This friend, too, came from a place with a funny name, not too far from Fidelity itself. He grew up in the tobacco patch and attended a one-roomed country school, about seven miles from Fidelity. Later he went away to get his high school work in what was then called a normal school; he kept on going, paying his way by teaching in one-roomed country schools similar to the ones that he and I had known. Nothing seemed to stop him: early lack of opportunity seemed only to whet his appetite for more learning. And he succeeded in convincing others of his ability; he overcame some of his back-country shyness; he obtained a doctorate in a very special and valuable field; he was appointed to a national office and, later, to the United Nations. My, isn't that a long way for one to go, or come, from a neighborhood a few miles from Fidelity? Many learned men today mention this country boy's name with respect; he is well know in the capitals and universities of Europe as well as in his own country. What in the world possessed the boy? And, since he is a little younger than I, he still has plenty of time to add more honors to his name.

When I face a room full of freshmen, I often think of this famous

man and his rise to fame. He did not follow the usual rags-to-riches formula to fame, for he is not rich, particularly, but he, rather, followed some of the finer phases of the lives of Franklin and Jefferson. He would have loved Browning's grammarian, the scholar who kept on working at abstruse questions of Greek grammar, even after he was a pathetic invalid. He wanted to know. And this old-time acquaintance of mine has, in our materialistic times, carried a banner for abtruse learning and lived to profit by it. Maybe some boy in that graduating class, maybe the very one from Monkey's Eyebrow, will find a place in the world quite as great as did my fellow-countian. One of the student speakers on this same night I have referred to said that it was not likely that any large number would be famous but that it was possible for every one to attain to something above his present status. From a Dutch immigrant grandfather to a member of U. N. in sixty years is nothing to be laughed at. And yet that is what the boy from Calloway County has been able to achieve: his grandfather moved into our part of the world before my time; my father was the family doctor and brought this famous man's father into the world, and also all his brothers and sisters. And the old Dutchman, who never learned to speak English except with an accent, paid his way in his adopted country and left his stamp on some rugged descendants. Some of the better-off people in Father's practice looked down their noses at the old fellow with his broken English, but I wonder whether any of their grandchildren have gone so far and accomplished so much as the boy from the one-roomed school who has sat proudly at U. N., who lectures before the most learned bodies of scientists in the world, who took, from a community no better off than Monkey's Eyebrow, a place in the big world and held it, not trying to excuse himself for being from an out-of-the-way place with a strange name.

LAMP-LIGHTING TIME

Late this afternoon, when I turned on the light at my desk, it suddenly dawned on me how simple an act that was, how lacking in the poetry and almost religion that used to attend the lighting of the lamp at evening. Lamps in the old household were not for just any time; they were a symbol of night and man's triumph over darkness. It became a daily rite to light up. Some poor families had only a single lamp, which they guarded carefully; lighting it was a solemn occasion, just as cleaning the chimney required skill and great care. In other homes there were several lamps, but the one that was the real one lighted the living room, where the whole family sat or talked or worked. It became a great honor to be asked to perform this rite. Everybody had matches in my day, but they were saved carefully. When the fire was burning on the hearth, no one would have dreamed of using a match and being so wasteful. Every home had an array of candle-lighters--pieces of paper rolled up and sitting in a bottle or jar or vase--ready for just such an occasion. But that was great fun, even when we did not get to strike a match. It took some skill to carry the flame, like some priest or priestess of eld, to the lamp on the table. Then the bright light--bright to us who had never known any other lamps--colored up the whole room. Very well-to-do people would have two lamps at once in a single room, but most of our homes had only one. The front room, that sacred room of the old-fashioned house, had its hanging lamp with glass pendants, which danced and scattered light all over the room. Some parlors or front rooms had dainty lamps with globes that fitted on over the actual lamp chimney, globes that caused the light to be soft and dream-like. But any lamp was a miracle, a definite sign that man had helped conquer the dark, that

old enemy that still frightens many civilized people, even though they pretend that they are no longer afraid.

Those old-fashioned lights that we grew up with had a way of casting shadows—deep, dark shadows—in the corners. Brave little boys sometimes feared that some monster from the picture books might be lurking in those corners, some modern version of giants, and boogers generally. Little boys, then as now, loved to play on the floor, right among the feet of the grown-ups. Some of this being so close by was a genuine feeling for companionship, a desire to feel that the youngster belonged and was not a mere waif. Also this playing among the feet reassured the youngster and kept the darkness of the corners from devouring him. Somehow, as I look a long way back, I feel that the best time of playing on the floor came when some older member of the family read aloud. I played with mere blocks or sticks or pictures, but, in the evenings when Big Sister read, those small objects became objects in a romantic world that stretched far away beyond any hills I had ever seen. I listened to "Snow-Bound" and "Evangeline" and many another poem in the dim light of the coal-oil lamp and had no difficulty in imagining myself a part of the life that the poems brought to our far-away country home.

Just as the lighting of the lamp was a rite, so the blowing out the light was another. No darkness in my life today can ever be quite so dark as what I experienced in my very early boyhood. All the strange things that hid in corners might come out and start trouble then; if it were winter, the bedclothes did not seem so hot and ~~scratchy~~ scratchy; in summer, however, it was a trial to keep from covering up, head and ears, to shut out the darkness and what it might bring. Of course, many a home, when the children were young, merely turned down the light, for it might be necessary to get up to see about the youngsters at any time. But the strange new poetry of lighting the lamps all over again would be on the program for the next coming on of darkness.

FIFTY YEARS AS A TEACHER

By the time this essay appears in the newspapers that use my column, I will have celebrated fifty years as a teacher. Among the piles of old composition books in which I kept a diary for so long I recently found the one that recorded my first day as a schoolmaster, July 1, 1907. Apparently I did not regard that day as anything to write extensively about; I seemed to have no theories about what an important date that was in my life. In the midst of a few sentences about the weather and the wild flowers that were then in bloom, two sentences record the momentous day. In my lifetime fondness for putting things down in words, I named the six boys and four girls who constituted the first day's attendance. Then I added, with all the aloofness of a general surveying a great battlefield: "We got all the classes organized and the wheels started to turning." And then away in my diary to thistles in bloom and corn tassels appearing. No other day of that first six months of my career as a teacher seems to have fared any better, maybe because I did not know what to write. I do remember that I was scared half to death when those ten youngsters faced me. I noted at the end of the day's record that I read the first Psalm. Maybe that familiar passage of exquisite beauty reassured me and helped me start the wheels.

There is no doubt about it: I was there that day, I was the eighteen-year-old teacher, I was determined to do things in a worthy way. But I cannot remember a thing about it all. My diary, written that night, is all I have to prove that I had such a day. What happened that first day long ago blended with other similar days, and time had smoothed off some of the raw edges of it all. The whole school year seems to have occurred in some pre-existence of mine, or even it seems to be something I may have heard or read

about. Only a few of those ten children have ever crossed my path in later life; all of them now living may be great-grandparents, for even the smallest one is now fifty-six. Only last year I taught the nephew of one of those small children and learned that the uncle, a pink-cheeked boy of ten when I had him as a pupil, died many years ago. And the school itself disappeared years ago, too, consolidated with others near by. Fifteen years ago I tried to find the exact place where the building had stood but was unable to do so. I stood where I supposed it to have been and tried very hard to bring back some of the happenings of 1907 that might make it seem like a part of my life. Since I lived in that school district only a year, and since my only means of locomotion was my feet, I was somewhat limited to an area a few miles wide, an area, by the way, so changed as to roads and buildings that I could not find my way around.

Fifty years after the event, I cannot help wondering why I wanted to be a teacher. As far back as I can remember, I had had no other ambition, at least, not for more than a day or two at a time. I have kept that same strange feeling to the present day. There has never been a temptation to leave the schoolroom, even though I could have made more money elsewhere and much more reputation. That little one-roomed building, inadequate, and dirty with the accumulated dirt of years, looms like some sort of sacred shrine in my life. It was mine for a year only, but no change of time, no rolling up of years can take it away. Though the events of the years now seem dreamy and unreal, they still are and were mine. And by my teaching that one-roomed school I became a part of a long tradition that is now passing swiftly. And your little school, too, must have been like mine, a quaint memory of a long, long time ago.

BEFORE AUTOMOBILES

Recently, in speaking before the Mammoth Cave National Park Homecoming on customs that have passed away within the memory of all of us middle-aged people, I named the two eras of my life as B. A., "Before Automobiles," and A. A., "After Automobiles." Historians are forever seeking some great event to mark the end of one era and the coming of another: a great battle or a settlement in a new land or the birth or death of a great man. Probably only a few forward-looking people could have guessed that the snorting of the first uninhibited automobile was the warning sound that rang in a new era. For me, personally, that now-familiar sound occurred on the day that I first went away to start my education, at Christmas, 1906. A trainload of us were going to Benton and Paducah from Murray and smaller way stops; the train pulled in to the old union station at Paducah and stopped. There, shining in all its newness, was an automobile, topless and with no muffler. The driver cranked the strange contraption, the engine gave several coughs and splutters, and away the four-wheeled miracle sped, deafening us all and kicking up more dust that would have a dozen mules turned loose in a dry pasture. That was it, if we had only known it! The horse-drawn vehicle was doomed, the gentility of the family buggy and the surrey was soon to become only a memory and often one to be laughed at by younger persons who had never known how important we were in horse-and-buggy days when we drove the buggy or the surrey.

The passing of former customs had already started fairly obviously long before 1906; the coming of cars only accelerated this movement. Though railroad trains had come into our part of the world before the War between the States, they had made only a stab at long-established ways of doing things. For some people the railroad had meant selling out in the village that had been left off the railroad and moving to

the county seat; for most of the rest of us the railroad was something to see when we went to town, a something that often scared the horses we drove and filled us with longings to travel far away behind the cinder-strewing engines that drew into sight, stopped at our county-seat station, and then, with black smoke darkening the sunlight, raced away into unknown lands. But the railroad touched our lives only in small ways. Nobody owned a railroad engine; we still owned horses and buggies. But the automobile was and is a personal thing; it generates its own power, it belongs to a person rather than a company, it does not have to follow a rigid track, it can soon race across state lines and into strange worlds. This new invention--new so far as history is concerned--soon started changing our basic customs. We no longer were limited to a small area in which to live and have our being; the whole continent was ours, at least as fast as roads could be built. For good or ill, the automobile widened our horizons. The invention is still a little too new for us to have become adapted thoroughly to it; many of us still are driving the old family nag when we venture on our highways, even though we think we are sitting behind the wheel of a car. We have not yet become adjusted to the speed that cars can develop and the hazards that most roads offer. Our appalling highway accident toll shows that we are still like children playing with dynamite caps or gunpowder. Maybe, with rapid adaptation to our inventions, we can some time learn to be as sane and as safe with automobiles as we were with the old family nag and the old family buggy and wagon. Meanwhile, our customs are changing so fast that no mere census enumerator can keep track of them; we emphatically are living in the era that I have called A. A., "After Automobiles."

DRESSED LIKE A GENTLEMAN

It is hot summertime again, a time when it is nearly impossible to be comfortable. Lots of people are sitting as many hours as possible in houses that have air-conditioning; the rest of us probably would like to have such good luck; we take some comfort in having smaller or larger fans. Somehow my memories go back to a time not too long ago when things were even warmer than they are now. Light-weight clothes were then few indeed. When I taught my first school, back in 1907, I wore the same suit in summer and in winter; I do recall that I had a light-weight coat for summer wear, but I would have felt disgraced not to have worn that coat, even at the dinner table in the farm home where I boarded. Underwear in those days was hot and long, usually only slightly differentiated from the long-handled type worn in the coldest winter weather. And collars were stiff and laundered; it was not long after putting one on until it was a limp, sticky rag around the neck. Our fans were turkey wings or palm leaves, with no electricity to propel them. Wielding a fan can generate a lot of heat, too; so that a fan often defeated its purpose by making us hotter with it than without it. Of course, in the country church, when a fellow had a date, it was his bounden duty to wield that fan or die trying. Society had many more demands then than now, in rigid adherence to customs, especially.

Tomorrow I shall go to my class, coatless and maybe tie-less. There will not be a coat or a collar in the class, even though a large number of boys and mature men are there. And no lady will be wearing a hat. Arms, male and female, will be bare. At least the fans will be running to keep the air of the classroom moving, even though they will not be bringing in any especially cool air. Many of us, doubtless, will sit and swelter and wonder how or why school should keep in such weather. I would like to remind any such, including the teacher, that we are living close to the North Pole itself as compared with

the early summers of the forty-nine consecutive ones that I have taught or attended school. Most of those summers rolled around before I felt like shedding my coat; even 1930, the hottest on record, saw me every day in coat and tie. And I was in no way odd-looking; everybody else was as big a fool as I was. Just how much farther we are going in our search for comfort I do not know, but I am certainly glad that we have come thus far.

Last night, at a club meeting to which I spoke, I mentioned still further rigid customs that I had known in my earlier years. A young man dressed for church or for a call on his best girl would have worn gloves; no gentleman would have been caught dead without these appendages. I doubt whether the best girl would have invited him in when he came to call if he had come bare-handed. And it has been a much shorter time since most of the male population have left off hats for ordinary times. When I began going bareheaded, in 1910, not to start a fad but to try to keep down headaches, I got many a strange look and might easily have been held for questioning. In ancient times a woman appearing bareheaded in public was subject to severe fines or even death. Enough of that old-time sentiment survived into my time to question even one's right to wear no hat. Even when it was the custom to leave off one's hat, everybody was expected to be holding one in his hand. Even as late as 1929, when I returned to Fidelity to attend my mother's funeral, I stopped in Murray and bought a hat, which I never wore in its lifetime; I had it in my hand, of course; if I had not so carried it and had appeared bareheaded, the story of my being so queer would still be told in that area by the older people, told to youngsters who would have no remote idea about the badness of the act.

Heavy clothes, almost-red-hot underwear, coats, ties, hats--what next? If going barefooted--actually, not with sandals on--should ever become common, count on me. I miss the freedom that my country feet used to have.

CARELESS WEEDS

A humorous story-teller recently mentioned "careless weeds" and set me to thinking about the weeds that used to grow around our houses and gardens and especially our names for them. Sometimes our names are to be found in the botany books; most often they are not. We might start with the jokester's Careless Weed, otherwise Red-rooted Pigweed, or he may have meant Thorny Pigweed. It certainly loves the loose rich soil of a garden and seems to thrive on dry weather or any other kind that will kill off the cabbage or tomatoes or other late-summer plants. It has millions of seeds and has never suffered enough for the breed not to continue and to furnish work for the gardener with his hoe or his more modern instruments. Then there is Lamb's Quarters, a thrifty plant that grows equally fast at the edges of manure piles or at the edges of the garden. Hosts of them used to appear at the side of the sweet potato bed, where there was an ample amount of nitrogen. In the early days of the plant it is edible; at least, I have eaten several pounds of it in wild greens and am still around. Of course, a good, rich place is a "natural" for Cockle-burs. No more adaptable plant grows than this tough customer. If the ground is too wet early in the spring, the bur comes up late but always produces seeds. I have seen Cockle-burs as tall as I am, but I have also seen little stalks, only a few inches tall, covered with seeds. All farm boys know about these burs and the manes and tails of stock; these are the ones that used to be in the cow's tail when she switched it clear around the milker's neck. Poets who used to sing about the joys of farm life had never milked such a cow. When I was small, we were told that the Cockle-bur had two seeds(which is true), but that only one would come up in one year, leaving the other one for the next year. When you think how hardy the plants can be, you can believe anything.

"How dear to my heart," goes one of our early sentimental songs. I can truly say that I enjoy Dog Fennel. It is rarely a garden pest; it

prefers the barnyard, usually rich, hard-packed land. If Dog Fennel were as scarce as orchids, poets would rave about it, and young women would vie with each other in bragging about the exotic corsages of Dog Fennel that their boy friends had sent. Lowell said almost that very thing, in a little more dignified way, about the Dandelion. The species of Dandelion now so common and troublesome in our yards had not penetrated to Fidelity when I was a boy; the plants with this same sort of bloom were to be found along the edges of cultivated fields or along streams or in the open woods. Again, if it were rare, what a great to-do would be made over it, such as the International Dandelion-Growers Association!

In the horse lot, which was our local name for barnyard, grew giant Jimpson Weeds, with their horn-like blooms. Some of our flower-loving neighbors grew a perennial type of this weed, called, correctly, by them Datura. But it was only our barnyard weed dressed up and growing among exotic plants. When the weeds get mature and tough, it takes a good weed-cutter to chop them down, a task often assigned to me.

Rich, neglected soil also produced its Burdock. Wide, pale-green leaves always reminded me of Rhubarb, but I never tried to eat any of them. The burs in late fall are even more pestiferous than the ordinary Cockle-burs. When we raised sheep, we felt anything but pleasure in trying to get the burs of this species out of the wool. Very bad boys sometimes took a handful of them to school and rubbed a few of them into the hair of the girls they liked best.

Overfertilization of our soils sometimes brought us a plague of dock of several species. The narrow-leaved species was one of the numerous plants added to wild greens, but superstitious people swore that the broad-leaved type was poisonous. I added some of these questionable leaves once and suffered no bad effects. I will admit that I would not want to eat a whole serving of just this sort.

Even weeds reveal the folkishness of the old-time garden and its place in the family economy. Careless weeds are a key to this interrelation of man and plants.

The same humorous speaker who referred to Careless Weeds also spoke of "chewing wax." The kind he talked about was called Long Johnny in Fidelity. It was put up in the form of long sticks and wrapped with a colored piece of paper. As the speaker said, however, it was not ordinary wax but was flavored, colored paraffin. He remarked that the longer you chewed it, the bigger it got. Wax was wax, however, and those who could not get chicle ~~chicle~~ gum had to be satisfied with paraffin. I can recall how brow-beaten the youngsters were who had only this white, fluffy, gooey-feeling paraffin wax. All real fellows craved wax that was the aristocratic kind.

But wax, even paraffin wax, cost money, and money was scarce. Nature stepped in to supply this deficiency. There were thousands of Sweet Gum trees in our neck of the woods. A few strokes with an ax would not injure the tree and would cause sap to flow out and gradually assume the form and consistency of chewing gum. With Russell Barlow knife, a bit of patience, and a not-too-persnickety taste, you could soon have a mouthful of this sharp-flavored stuff and feel as big as the other fellow with his store-bought wax. All went well unless the gum decided to collapse in your mouth and stick to your teeth so well that you could hardly scrape it off. I suppose that saliva, plus sweet gum, plus whatever bugs and worms and ants had traveled over the gum before it was harvested caused this disaster. I had no difficulty in understanding how the Deacon's Masterpiece, the One-hoss Shay, went to pieces all at once; that is exactly what my sweet gum often did.

The whole cycle of chewing gum at all has been covered in my time. Little fellows had to be spanked for bringing it to school and chewing it "in time of books," young ladies who appeared in public with this jaw-exercising stuff were scolded severely by their proper mothers and grandmothers, and now, it seems to me, everybody chews gum all the time "between

meals." There seems to be no disgrace unless it is in not having any gum. One of my teachers, back when the century and I were in our our early teens, used to give minute directions about how and when to chew gum:

" 1. Go home;

2. Go to your own room;

3. Pull down the shades;

4. Turn your face to the wall in the darkest corner;

5. Chew to your heart's content. "

About thirty years ago some of my students in the literary society of which I was sponsor had a heated debate on the propriety of chewing gum. One girl, pretty mature for that time, defended chewing gum by announcing how well it developed the facial muscles and thereby contributed to beauty. She held her poise so well and argued so convincingly that all three judges voted for her side of the question. Incidentally, that girl would not have been caught dead with a chew of gum in her mouth and probably still has the same opinion. Rather oddly, not more than a few months ago a half-page ad in a teacher's magazine extolled the healthful process of chewing gum, with its development of facial muscles and its rounding out of otherwise skinny or formless faces. Shades of my old-time teacher! I hope no devotees of this philosophy have appeared in his church, for after his fling at teaching he became a famous Methodist preacher. If his parishioners chew gum in his church while he expounds the Bible, then the whole cycle has been covered.

A few years ago I attended a noon-day concert at the Tabernacle at Salt Lake City. I had often heard the great organ on radio; now was my chance to hear it and see it. Two seats in front of me was another tourist, a young woman, who could have kept time to the music, classic or less, the world-famous organist played for us. Up and down, up and down, squads right, squads left, hep--went her jaws. I forgot to notice whether she kept the tempo of the music. And so chewing wax and its aristocratic relative called chewing gum and Salt Lake City all get mixed up in my mind.

A QUARTER A DAY

The humorist whom I have quoted several times recently, who talked about careless weeds and such, also mentioned the difference between his salary as a worker when he was a boy and now. He said, "I used to work for a quarter a day, and I thought I was making good money. Times haven't changed much; I work now for nothing since my wife made me buy a power plow for the garden." I know that many of the younger ones who heard him wondered at his quarter a day, but I can back him up. I, too, worked for some pretty small wages, that is, if judged by present standards. Even after I was about grown-up, I helped strip tobacco for a whole week at forty cents a day, and I suspect that I was paid above the average then. Even in the last year that I spent on the farm I substituted for one of our tobacco-cutting crew and got seventy-five cents for less than a whole day's work. I suppose the farmer was generous, for while I was working in his place, his wife presented him with two boys, weighing eight and a half and ten pounds, respectively. That seventy-five cents must have been in lieu of a fat cigar, but cigars as hand-outs on celebrations of that sort were unknown at Fidelity. It was easy enough to have a cigar without getting one given you: all you had to do was to roll up a leaf of hillside tobacco and light it. And, back to wages, the regular wages of hired men was ten dollars a month and board and room. When our nearest neighbor raised his hired man to twelve dollars a month, the rest of us gasped. It was getting too easy to be a hired man, too remunerative. And then, along in 1907, I, too, got into the big money. I taught my first school that year and received $210 for six months of teaching. That would have been a fortune, but I had to pay $60 of it for board and a big sum to get back home, for my native county had so many teachers in those days that I had to go elsewhere to find employment.

Mark Twain, in A CONNECTICUT YANKEE AT KING ARTHUR'S COURT tells how the hero, a modern that got sent back into that long-ago time, tried to explain to the citizens of that time how the actual amount of a payment for services rendered was not the basis for determining whether people were better or worse off. The modern was unable to get over this point, just as it is nearly impossible to tell youngsters of today how many things $210 would have bought in 1907. Among other things, it enabled me to go to school for several months and to have enough backlog of finances to await the first check for the next school year. That next check was a whopper, $50 for one month and only $11 for board. I was going up hill fast. And the third and last year of my public-school teaching brought me $55 a month, with only one dollar extra to my expenses for board. Today the youngsters get such problems to solve as this: "A farmer sold 500 bushels of wheat at $1.25 a bushel, ten head of cattle at ~~$125~~.32 each, and 325 bales of hay at $2.13 a bale. How much did he get?" How about this type of high finance: Gordon Wilson, in 1907, earned $210 for teaching Oakwood School for six months; he paid Robert Baker $60 for board; he bought a suit of clothes for $15 and a pair of shoes for $3.50; then, after his school was over, he went back to his home at Fidelity, spending $5.63 for his railroad ticket, 25 cents for dinner between trains, and 5 cents for a bottle of soda pop. How much money to spend on his education did he have when he arrived at Fidelity?" Now, that takes figuring. That is genuine high finance. Talk about millionaires and their piles of old musty dollars that have not been turned over in fifty years! What does a millionaire know about making the pennies count? "A quarter a day?" you ask. Sure.

FREEZER ICE CREAM

A few days ago, while I was waiting my turn at a candidate for the A. M. degree, who was taking his oral examinations, I jotted down on a card just these words, which had no remote connection with the courses I had taught this student in or with anything else except this column: "Freezer Ice Cream." And today, just before I wrote this, July 21, I turned through the magazine section of the COURIER-JOURNAL, and there was my subject, already preempted by Cissy Gregg, the food expert of that great newspaper. Now Miss Gregg has been there; she knows what an ice cream freezer is like and how to operate it a few thousand revolutions. She remembers the strange thrill of having so much good eating and how the younger generation have missed much by not having to toil a bit for such a blessing as ice cream. However, I just cannot picture Miss Gregg as having lived so far away from things as I did at Fidelity and of having ice cream so irregularly, even though she and I may have shared in the amounts that we had consumed in earlier days.

Before I could remember very well, some of our better-off neighbors had ice houses, in which they stored considerable quantities of ice in such winters as brought a pretty thick coating to the horse-and-duck ponds on their farms. Several back yards had great mounds of earth that had been dug up to make the ice house. But I cannot recall having seen any such ice. However, as far back as I can remember, those who had some ready money could, when they were leaving the county seat to drive back into the far-away hills of Fidelity, ~~could~~ go by the ice plant and spend a quarter or half dollar very extravagantly, wrap up their treasure in some burlap bags, and whip up the mules in order to get home and have a feast before the ice melted. Gallons of ice cream were made and eaten, often a half dozen neighbors sharing the feast.

But such extravagance was rare in our Scotch household, and there was small likelihood that we would have another such blow-out until another year, except, of course, exchange engagements with the neighbors when they went on a spending spree and gave their ice cream treat.

Of course, there were ice cream suppers, but they cost money. I recall having worked in a stand once where, for a quarter, one could get three saucers--huge saucers, almost bowls--of ice cream, with home-made teacakes thrown in for good measure, just like getting crackers at the country store with cheese. And how the boys would treat their girls to this luscious ~~treat~~ dish! Some skin-flints, who owned several hundred acres of land, sometimes stood around, hoping that some kind-hearted fellow would give a treat, as only a few brave ones could possibly hold the three saucers for a quarter. I never had a full quarter to spend for ice cream, because there was soda pop, and there was chewing gum. One quarter had to cover a multitude of hungers. Of course, when I worked in a stand after I was a big boy, I got all the ice cream I could eat; it almost nauseates me now to think how much that would be.

Long after I grew up and got married, the old familiar freezer was still to be turned a million miles before I took off for Sunday School. And for years, when we ordered ice cream in quantity from the drug store, it came in a freezer can and bucket. And that was wise, for before mechanical freezing, a bucket of ice cream would not have lasted long in summer heat unless it had been packed in properly salted ice. Many things puzzle me, even though I know I should not be puzzled. One of them is the ease with which you can now stop at any roadside place, even miles from anywhere, and pick up ice cream and homogenized milk and anything else that you would have found only in very ritzy kitchens not too many years ago.

NECK AND EARS

One of my long-time friends has reminded me that I have not as yet reviewed the old-fashioned practice of washing the neck and ears. He declares that he did not know this process had to do with three organs rather than one; it all sounded like one--"neck'n'ears." I recall that I have often mentioned, sometimes rather nostalgically, the week-end bath in the washpan, but I suspect that this ablution was in no sense adequate enough. I am sure that my own washing myself in a washpan failed to dislodge many layers or areas of dirt. The operation called "washing the neck and ears" was done, in our family, by Big Sister, a thorough finder and chaser of dirt. Old Dutch Cleanser could easily have used her picture to illustrate the slogan now long famous. Sunday morning was the time for this sacrifice, one of the most severe ones I have yet made. Big Sister got a pan of hot water and a washrag made of the ribbed ends of long-handle winter underwear. These ribs can act somewhat like sandpaper; what the first wave of ribs does not dislocate, the next wave will catch. When my sister would bend my neck over into her lap and rub my neck the wrong way, I would howl like something dying in agony; I feared that my very blood would ooze out after that weekly ordeal. Though I squealed every time, I got no mercy; big sisters are pretty thorough executioners sometimes. But after the auto da fe was over, I was shining and red for Sunday School; maybe that is the reason my neck still sweats all the time, summer and winter; the doctor thinks it is the goitre; I prefer to believe it a left-over from old-time scrubbings in my early youth.

There were other phases of this weekend sacrifice to respectability. Sometimes the same Big Sister put an apron around my neck and cut my hair or such odd tags of it as seemed most to mar my youthful beauty. And that same unruly hair had to be spruced up for Sunday School, to

match the scrubbed, shiny neck and ears. My locks were parted away down near the ear; the rest of the hair was "roached" over the top of the huge dome that I have always had to carry around. At least before the rough-house started in church after the lesson was over, my plastered hair remained in place and my shiny countenance resembled what we read about on the faces of saints. I cannot be quite so specific about my looks later, for some bad boy might deliberately run his hand over my head and wreck all the plastered hair. I should have hit him in the nose, Sunday School or not, but I did not and am sorry, more than a half century later. I suspect that I found most of my refuge in tears and clinging to my two older sisters.

When I was six, a broomsedge photographer set up his tent in a broomsedge field near Fidelity and took pictures of all sorts until after frost. No get-rich-quick scheme ever drew more people. And I, the baby of the big family, had to be photographed, alone, with another one or two of the children, and in the family group. My Big Sister, a grown young woman by now, spent additional minutes on my looks, so that my colorless hair was laid just right and my ears and neck were slick and shiny. As I sat down in the elaborate chair and had the clamp adjusted to my head to keep me still for the execution, I was probably about as nearly ready for tragedy as I have ever been. I was afraid that a birdie might actually fly out of the camera; I was even more fearful that those head-rests would cut into my brain and leave me a half-wit for whatever tortuous years were ahead. Fortunately I lived through the ordeal and had the satisfaction of seeing the Photographic plate reposing in a transparent bath of some sort, a rather spooky thing all in shadows where I shone most brightly. And, to this day, as the Bible might say, that stiff pose and that fearful little six-year-old look out from the old tin-type, a monument to scrubbed ears and neck and plastered colorless hair.

NAILS AND HAIR

A whole book, a very interesting one, could be written about such odd subjects as finger nails and hair. Even superstitions about these necessary appendages would run to many pages. If all the stuff that has been written about falling hair alone were brought together, it would be a good thing, provided a can of gasoline and a lighted match were ready for the fun.

Finger nails are queer things, anyway. It is very bad luck to cut a baby's nails until it is so old: that age varies in various parts of the world; hence I am unable to give a specific pronouncement. Be sure to burn or bury nail cuttings; if an enemy could get hold of them, he would have you in his power, by making a conjure bag and putting these or cast-off combings inside. Biting finger nails proves just about everything from some high-sounding psychological something to plain cussedness. And sucking one's finger portends most of the ills that can happen to humanity. And the day on which you cut nails will determine your luck, good or bad, from now on. You had better wait until the signs are right before you undertake such a dangerous thing. And toes and fingers are unilke in this matter; the month of March is especially dangerous, and poor old Friday, the "most unluckiest" day of them all, should be avoided for nearly everything.

Don't wash your hair on certain days, also unlucky for just about all your activities. Don't sit in a draft after washing your hair, even in hot weather; pneumonia and all its friends will camp on your doorstep if you violate such simple rules. And look out for shaving hair on the neck; that will make the hair coarse and very plentiful, too. Just how the hairs know a razor from a pair of shears is more than the superstitious ones have told me. And, unless you want to dare the fates

themselves, don't burn hair-combings; that will make your hair brittle. And start right now to attack your falling hair; you will probably still be attacking the remnants when you are old enough to retire. Patent medicine will relieve the swelling of the pocket-book, but I am afraid that it will seldom relieve falling hair. Buy two bottles of stuff and try an experiment: let one be a loudly-advertised hair restorer and the other one plain, undiluted branch water. Rub the patent stuff on one side of your head according to directions; ditto, the branch water. After a six-weeks treatment, please advise me of the results. I think that would add a great deal of knowledge to the world, whether any extra hairs sprouted on your balding noggin. If all the bottled stuff had done good, why do we have bald and balding barbers? Some one has suggested that they practiced on themselves so much that the worst happened. I suspect that they chose the wrong parents to begin with, with tendencies to falling hair.

But it would be hard on hopeful people who have started to grow bald to prevent them from this perennial effort to thwart nature. Not to have gray hair or baldness would brand us as perennially young. The rubbing on of some vile-smelling stuff may help inflate your ego and prevent you from imagining that age is creeping up behind you. If you get a kick from rubbing branch water on your scalp, go ahead; you could do much worse. To make things even up, please add a little soap; at least you will have a clean scalp(pronounced skelp) to show for the bottles of the wonderful restorer you have bought. And, incidentally, you might not look too old, even if you lost most of your locks. There are worse things than baldness, even though many a balding young man might not think so.

T+C

"CHILDREN'S HEADS ARE HOLLOW"

When I was much younger than I now am, I read a little rhyme about how to teach children. I have forgotten all of it except these two lines:

"Ram it in, cram it in
Children's heads are hollow."

If I recall the burden of the whole foolish rhyme, it was that children must be taught, willingly or unwillingly, with the teachers acting the part of a sausage-stuffer. I suppose that the author of such a great poem must have been born in the good old days when children were not supposed to have any say-so about what they are to learn. Anyway, the silly words have set me to thinking of the things that filled the mind of one boy, not through any force but because of his happening to live at a certain time.

The mind works, just as the heart beats. It grinds whatever grist is brought in. And, in a host of years, some good bags of grain are brought in. But this lad's mind was hungry all the time and kept on grinding, no matter what the quality of the grist. He was exposed to nature, not especially spectacular nature, but an assortment of clear springs and brooks that flowed over pebbles or white sand and on into larger and ever-larger creeks and rivers, until his little roadside spring ultimately made connection with the Mississippi River itself. And there were woods, deep, dark woods in the creek bottoms, open woods on the hills where there used to be man-made prairies. And in the woods were flowers, just such flowers as would grow under the trees, chiefly millions of spring flowers but a fair-sized crowd of hardy ones that could live through the dry summers and on into the fall. And, wherever the boy turned, there were birds, again nothing spectacular, but birds, anyway, with the miracle of migration dimly guessed at, and with the annual miracle of nesting. And everywhere, summer and winter, there

centage of us will never put into permanent form even a small account of what things used to be like. And, before long, even those who do set down, in their way of making a museum, simple little stories of how we did things and how we felt and ached and rejoiced will be regarded with the same half-wondering, half-sneering looks that are given to artifacts arranged on museum shelves. But we can have the satisfaction, here or wherever we may be then, that those same half-serious ones who pass over our cultural origins will still be the recipients of the accomplishments made so silently and so unassumingly by unknown and unrewarded transmitters of folkways. The leopard will outgrow his spots before the race of men give up patterns of living that distinguish us from one another and from the rest of animated nature.

Every observant person, I am trying to say, is building and has built a museum of intangible things, memories of what used to matter, what once was a sign of being somebody, what was always around in the world but was never properly appreciated. And it is this museum-building that is ready for the novel that delineates another time and place, a play that dips back into our cultural history, a painting or a song or a legend that somehow catches some of the echoes of times long gone. Holmes, in lamenting the passing of so many people who were never able to express in words the depth of their sorrow, concludes that we must take the few who do express themselves and their time as samples of what could be done, even though he sighs, as must we:

"Alas for those who never sing
But die with all their music in them."

My earliest memories of people concern themselves with literally asking hundreds of questions when I was around the people who had migrated in a family caravan, who had actually seen Revolutionary War soldiers, who had hunted in the area later to be called the Jackson Purchase. I wish that I had then known how valuable were the stories told me by actual participants; here was history, not a book but the living actors.

BUILDING A MUSEUM

One of our American humorists said, a few years ago, that any one could start a great museum if he would only keep what he had at any particular time, keep it in mothballs until it had gone out of style or had become a scarce article. Then the owner could bring out his possession and soon have a group of inquisitive people asking about what used to be so ordinary and commonplace. Though said in fun, this statement was a profound truth.

Many phases of our former lives are passing so rapidly that we need some such persons as the humorist described, to keep in mothballs what can never be replaced. Every time I visit a museum, I am impressed with the fast pace we have set in changing from one way of life to another. Nearly everybody feels that pioneer objects are valuable, that archaeological material is irreplaceable, but we are failing to see how important things nearer our time are becoming. Formerly we kept things lovingly, filling up attics and sheds with them; then we got into a habit of cleaning up and disposing of what had gone out of style. Whereas the family furniture, protected by a dozen layers of varnish and paint, spent many a year in the storerooms without deteriorating, these slightly younger artifacts were dismissed with little or no thought of their worth, hauled off and dumped into a gully or sinkhole. It is true that there was more sentiment attached to articles that were made by hand than ever grew around some "fetched-on" object. But, how well many of us oldesters remember the pride we felt in these same objects, now broken or discarded. By degrees, some of our antique hunters are getting a taste for these less-ancient treasures and may help retrieve some of them before they are entirely gone.

But a museum, however large and adequate it may be, can never house the memories that cluster around things and ways. A very large per-

were bird songs, not always identified but appreciated for what they were. And along the banks of the drains and creeks the fall weeds grew tall and dense, so that there were whole acres of bloom, with bees and butterflies, too. And night existed, too, back in those days, alluring, somewhat scary night, with owl notes and dog howls and, even more impressive than these, silence in the fields and over the woods. And snows came into the boy's life, not huge downpors like those that entrap railroad trains and automobiles, but small snows that blotted out the ordinary fields and made the most casual landscape look like something out of a story book.

And there were people, too, though they sometimes seemed a little too obvious; they sometimes got in the way of nature. Men cut down trees and broke up whole fields of flowers. But they had to be accepted, just like things in nature that seemed unnecessary or even bad. And, because the boy's father was a doctor, it was easy to hear groans and to see cuts and bruises and sores and other disgusting things. But there was trust in the faces of the sick and afflicetd, and the beared old doctor somehow relieved many a human pain and gave assurance that there was still some hope in the world. And there were playmates and causaul acquaintances, some of them crossing the boy's path only once but leaving strange memories of these brief encounters.

And, in spite of the remoteness of the time and place, there were books. Some of them were very trashy books, but others were the great books of all time. With no especial taste in reading, the boy read parts of all the books he found, some of them daring and morbid, but some of them bracing and thrilling. And, to add to their effect, there were actual people who had lived in the times made vivid by the books: pioneers who had traveled from far away in a covered wagon, soldiers who had faced fire at Shiloh and Gettysburg and had lived to tell their stories. And all of these things were being rammed into the child's head by his merely being around where they were, with no one trying to fill the hollow spaces in his brains. There were a few spaces left for later formal education, but most of the boy's hollow head was filled by experiences that may happen to anyone.

T & C

THE LADY WITH THE RAKE

One of my former teachers used to tell an excellent story about a wealthy old lady at Mobile who dared public opinion in very stiff times by taking a long-handled rake to her home on the street car. My future teacher, then a very proper teen-ager asked her, "Wouldn't the store send the rake up?" "I didn't ask," curtly replied the old lady. "Aren't you afraid of what people will think of you?" "I know who I am," replied the old lady in closing the conversation. Evidently this brave old soul died before it became quite the thing to "tote" one's own purchases; she should have lived to see the democracy of the supermarket of today.

It is easy for me to understand the scruples of the proper young boy, for I am not too many years younger than he and can remember when it was almost disgraceful to be caught with any sort of bag or box in one's arms. Such a thing would have branded you as being poor or boorish or cheap. Objects, however small, were delivered to everybody who was anybody. About thirty-five years ago I helped for a few days of my vacation in a bookstore that was rushed with schoolbook buying. This store had no delivery service. A boy of a third-rate family came in to buy a small bit of penmanship paper and refused to accept the purchase after I had put it into an envelope because he did not want to be caught carrying a parcel like a servant or a hired person. I was sorry to have made his life miserable, even for a minute. Along about that same time I bought two coal scuttles; the store offered to ~~deliver~~ send them by their next delivery on my street. Wishing to be brave and slightly contrary, I said that I would just carry the scuttles myself. You should have seen the looks given me as I slung those buckets along! You would have thought that I was an escapee of some sort. You see, my town, like yours, was a very proper place in the late teens of this century. And folks that were folks just did not carry bright, shiny coal scuttles along the street. Since I had nothing to lose, it made no difference.

In our part of the world this same haughty attitude prevailed, ~~with~~ somewhat weakened after cars came in, until chain stores appeared. And then, as if by some sort of magic, the whole structure broke down. Imagine a lady or a gentleman now who would be ashamed of being seen with an arm full of bundles! When the first chain store opened in my town, I was away in graduate work. When I got back at the end of the summer, imagine my surprise at seeing people who had bank accounts carrying bags of groceries.

I suppose that we could ascribe to the automobile many of our leveling tendencies now. Imagine a horse-drawn vehicle, no matter how elegant, trying to compete with cars on the roads. Imagine hearing someone brag about having had the finest horse-drawn vehicle in town. And imagine such a vehicle with a liveried driver trying to escape certain wreck from scared, though aristocratic, horses when the veriest Tin Lizzie thundered by!

When I was teaching my second school, I was invited out to dinner at the home of one of my pupils. It was an elegant home, with just about every modern convenience; the dinner was tops, too. But my hostess spoiled it all by apologizing a dozen times or so because she had to serve me food that she had cooked. You see, ladies that were ladies just did not stoop to such menial services as bending over a hot stove, even when preparing food for the stiff young school teacher. Or, at least, that was supposed to be the style, often violated. I had grown up in the kitchen, where I had helped Mother since I was big enough to put stovewood into the stove or fry bacon. Somehow the lady's protestation failed to impress me very much, even though I still remember it for its value as a passing institution.

HAIR, LONG AND SHORT

It has been difficult to explain to my girl students how many attitudes toward hair have been around since I could first remember. I am sure that I am regarded as a great yarn-spinner, the word "yarn" being used as a soft word for "lie." But you could almost write a history of America, certainly three or four generations of it, by putting down hair styles and attitudes toward them.

"Hair" used to be such a sacred thing that it was almost among the tabooed words. A lady's hair was her own affair, guarded against profane looks from the rabble. Combing her hair was a rite, witnessed only by other women or by the members of the family. To be caught "with the hair down" was little short of disgrace. I can recall having heard a woman in my own family cry because a rude neighbor boy entered our house without knocking and found her with her hair down. I tried then to fathom the disgrace of it all, but I failed; I discreetly said nothing, for taboos were sacred things and still are.

Disaster sometimes overtook the lady with beautiful hair. Pneumonia or some other long sickness caused so much hair to fall out that sometimes it was necessary to have the hair bobbed after a fashion. The young or older woman so disgraced did everything possible to hide her disgrace until nature had restored the head covering. Of course, this was the same attitude that made so much fuss when bobbing hair became fashionable. Fifty years ago, in my one-roomed school, there were two little girls whose mother, a "furriner," so far as the school district was concerned, actually gave the homely little fellows a Dutch bob. Catty remarks were made about this; some attributed the invasion of sacred rights as due wholly to the fact that the mother had been raised some forty miles away and had, therefore, not had the advantages of correct manners beaten into her. The rest of the girls, big or little,

wore pigtails, braided so tightly that it was the middle of the morning before the braids had slipped enough for the child to bat her eyes comfortably. One day at recess the ribbon came from the tow-colored braids of a little girl; her hair fell down over her shoulders. Instantly there was almost a panic; the bigger girls set to work to save the disgrace of the little girl. I wish I knew what ever happened to the children whose mother bobbed their hair. If either one ever reads this article and cares to do so, I would like to get a letter from her, telling me about her grandchildren, for it has been so long ago that there are certainly grandchildren. I wonder, and that is the purpose of this soliciting correspondence on the subject, whether any of the dire things happened to the girls or their mother because all committed such a wicked thing as to bob a small girl's hair.

It has not been so very long since bobbed hair became all the rage. The thunders rolled and the lightnings flashed, in gatherings at church and in the more private get-togethers at Grandpa's house. But bobbing hair went on, in spite of public clamor. Surely there would be some horrible outbreak of sinfulness to follow this vile offense against decency. If it broke, I failed to see it. The dangerous young girls who started it all are now staid middle-aged matrons, and their address is not some penitentiary or other correctional institution. They are nice club leaders and P. T. A. chairmen, and grandmothers. The world failed to come to an end that time, just as on many other occasions. And beauty shops, called by a variety of names, are not secret clubs where you go stealthily to get your hair fixed but boldly stand on respectable streets and even invite our daughters and granddaughters to come in and learn the art of arranging hair. Holy Moses, what would some aged grandma of 1907 have said to that?

CONTEMPORARIES OF THE PROPHETS

At the launderette where I often go to take the family wash I meet a retired former schoolmate of mine; it is easy for us to start talking of things of long ago. This week our talk turned on communication, back in the days before telephones, radio, and television. He had been reared in what is now the Mammoth Cave National Park, in an area about as far from anything as was Fidelity before Ky 121 arrived at its doors. Away up the river from his house lived the very humorist whom I have mentioned several times lately, the one who talked about chewing wax and careless weeds. On the right kind of day, when the atmosphere was perfect, my friend could hear this fellow holler, a good five miles away. Now that sounds like something a bit too much, but if you have never heard that man holler, you have many things still to learn. That voice could carry up and down Green River like Gabriel's horn. Long ago I recall having written in this column about the hog-caller of Fulton County whose voice carried so far. I know that he could be heard for miles; no other voice in my younger years could compare with his. Just as my old friend of a half century ago could call hogs and let the world know that he was still around and well, so the official hollerer of the Green River country could and did announce that another day had begun. In my little Fidelity neighborhood we had various hollers, most of them identifiable as coming from just one certain person. A morning was hardly a morning without these announcements that day was at hand and strong spirits were greeting it with a primitive shout.

In addition to these outlets for untamed spirits we had other ways of communication by hollering across the creek, a half mile or more. One of us would give a whoop to attract the attention of somebody on the other farms. A similar whoop would be given in return.

That answering whoop said that the line was open. Then one of us, even the women folks, would slowly and shrilly repeat a message: "Tell Brother Jim that Pappy is going to town today; ask him whether he wants to go." Sometimes it might take several repetitions, but the message finally got across, and Brother Jim was booted and saddled and mounted for the trip in no time. Sometimes this communication across the creek announced the arrival of relatives from the other side of the county. Good voices thus used saved catching a horse in the pasture and riding away around to get to the people who could communicate with hollering. It was not meant to be a neighborhood communication, but when Father came to the front door of our house and called the boys sleeping in his office in the corner of the yard, every one on our ridge knew that Doctor Wilson's boys would be getting up at once. Something in Father's voice just got you up, no matter how far in slumber you might have been.

Another neighborhood way of communicating was the mail. Before telephones came, some of our neighbors would actually write to their children, five or six miles away, and thus be able to keep in touch with them. One old lady whom I knew, the one whose flower gardrn was a delight of my young days, kept up a running correspondence with her three daughters, one of whom was the wife of my oldest brother. And one of the fine things about these letters, many of which I have read, was that they were so well composed that they are in themselves well worthy of the care that has been taken with them by my nieces. The old philosopher-lady told all sorts of chatty things about the old home and the pigs and chickens, but she injected some hopeful, practical sayings that reflected her basically literary turn of mind. In a way, I cannot help regretting that the telephone destroyed this strange but effective communication between the old home and the newer ones planted here and there in the county.

"A FUR PIECE"

Our little world at Fidelity was so small that all the distances now seem ridiculous, not only because of modern means of transportation but even with only feet to measure distances. Tennessee lay only four miles south of my father's house, but I was fourteen years old before I ever crossed that imaginary line between the two states. Many a place within four miles of my home, and on my side of the creek, too, could have been in China for all that I ever saw of them or have seen to this good day. Of course, the broad, muddy river bottom just north of us shut out traffic in that direction, as the only roads wound away around to get to those houses I could see when I went to feed the stock or when I went to the tobacco barn on the hill. Maybe following a pair of mules endless miles in plowing made us afraid to walk for the fun of walking; anyway, it was the custom to ride if you were going a half mile. Only in my last years on the farm did I indulge in my life-long love of exploring, on foot, far-away places. When I think how I have walked many times farther since I have been middle-aged, I laugh at my feeling so venturesome when I actually walked up the creek three or more miles. Some of the neighbors thought me queer to have walked so far.

Similarly, it was only a scant six miles to Tennessee River, but I was never there in my life except by wagon or buggy or horseback. I heard steamboats whistle for landings every week of my youth but never saw a steamboat until I had left home at eighteen. Sometimes in recent years I have wished I could go back to my section and walk all over it, to show how distances have so lessened since I was young.

Of course, the barriers that I have so often written about in this column were actual ones in those days. An unbridged creek, a gravelly ridge, a muddy bottom--all these could turn back all but

the very brave and hardy souls that knew no boundaries or barriers. A bridge, no matter how insignificant, soon created a channel through which farm animals and people found their way to other places; a ford across a shallow creek, especially if a footlog was erected near by, created a national highway for the neighborhood. Other places, very little different, soon were not used. Through the woods we had a school path, one that had been made long before I started to school. All the children went along it; it branched off like a highway system, channeling the youngsters into narrower and narrower bounds until the schoolhouse came into view. I tried to make a new path through wilder areas of our rather tame woods, but few others joined me. I doubt whether I could now find my private path, but the one selected so long before I was born, long ago deserted when the schoolhouse was changed to the village of Fidelity, still can be traced across the branch and up the side of the hill, like a remnant of the Santa Fe Trail or the Natchez Trace. Once let somebody or something walk along an untouched landscape, and the likelihood is that right there will develop a path and then a trail and then a road, like the crooked path made famous by Sam Walter Foss in his humorous "The Calf Path."

A thing that has often made me wonder is that many a well-established path or road is not the easiest way or the shortest. It got started long ago; that makes it still the way to go, no matter how many times it may bend or what impossible grades it may have. And so places that seemed so far away in other times still seem far away, though a few turns of a car wheel will span the distances; the new road, however, is more than likely a shorter cut and is a bit disdainful of winding around and around merely because the old path so wound.

T+C

BETTER OR WORSE?

A typical question asked those of us who admit to some years is, "Are things better now or worse than when you were young?" The question is very unfair. It presupposes that we older ones are capable judges and that our answers could not be questioned, either. Frankly, it is unfair or unwise to expect an older person to condemn everything, whether of older times or more recent ones. If one of us said that the older times were ever so much better than now, every one of the questioners would secretly say that Grandpap was getting old and forgetful. If we said that there has never been a time like now, they would say that the old fellow was entirely too spry for his age and refused to grow old naturally. At the risk of falling into one of these two pits, I shall attempt to answer the question, but with no very positive or negative assertion.

There are values that we have lost or are losing because of the changing times. Neighborliness, for example, cannot last forever, I fear. A neighborhood is now so nebulous that nobody could bound one. What used to be done as a neighborly act is now paid for, and both the payer and the payee expect this. Two years ago, when we buried my wife's father back in his old home neighborhood, nobody expected the neighborhood men and boys to turn out en masse and dig the grave. We paid for that solemn duty, paid men who regularly could be employed for that work. In some places, as you know, the old, old custom of digging the graves is kept up; nobody would think of expecting any pay for such necessary and sad labor.

Generosity, however, seems not to have been much affected by the passing of the old neighborhood. Whoever has an excess of fruits and vegetables seems as eager to share his good fortune as anybody I knew more than a half century ago. Most people who raise gardens deliberately plant more than they could possibly use. Openly they

would say that they plant so much to be sure of a crop; secretly they are already planning to divide with friends who do not have a garden or orchard or who do not raise the same kinds of things. In this summer of 1957 my wife and I have been the beneficiaries of pounds upon pounds of garden truck, all because our friends had more than they could use. Since I have no garden plot, I suppose that I must trade this column for vegetables, or maybe the thousand and one speeches that I have made "free gratis for nothing" could be taken as a sort of windy payment for these luscious things. Anyway, I still feel that neighborly generosity is an old-time thing that is not likely to die soon

To balance some of this kindly attitude that has come down to us, we have developed some virtues that were once hardly so common. Our horizon has so widened that we take in now people from everywhere, whereas we once were very awkward in the presence of outsiders or even suspicious of them. Everybody now has a relative or friend who lives far away, among people who have ways slightly different from ours. There is no need to apologize for outsiders, for most towns and many country areas are very composite as to origins. The two World Wars have stirred our population up so much that it is rare to find even a remote neighborhood that has had no outside influences since Civil War days.

A feature of our present-day life that greatly appeals to me is a frank democracy that is neither apologetic nor arrogant. Modern methods of living, such as schools, automobiles, travel, have been the means of ironing out differences that never really existed. Men are men, wherever you find them; castes are somewhat silly, anyway. And the old lines that were drawn pretty tightly are as hard to find as the Equator or the North Pole; it takes a sort of mechanical device to find it. One of my students, an excellent philosopher, observed a few days ago that, in her area, the old families are rapidly losing their once-great place in society; the work of that small town is being done now by plain people who have never had time to brag about great ancestors.

"WHAT'S IN A NAME?"

"What's in a name?" asked poor little Juliet, in love with a member of the opposite clan. But she had not lived in some of our counties and known the values of names. Since my earliest days at Western I have been interested in names and have developed an interest in trying to locate a person by his name. Because of recent migration to the cities, it is not always safe to guess, but very often I find that the person being questioned did not grow up where the name is so well known but that his people did. Take "Lindsey," for instance. If a person with that name is not from Edmonson County, he probably has a thousand relatives there with the name. In south-central Kentucky every big family has this story(and often it is true): three brothers(always three) with the name came from Virginia just after the Revolutionary War; one settled at Bowling Green, one at Russellville, and one at Morgantown. And now there are hundreds of descendants of these same three brothers, and most of them still "claim kin" with everybody else who bears the name. My ancestors, lineal and collateral, were much more numerous; there were twelve brothers who came to North Carolina, and seven or more of them drifted to Tennessee while it was still a part of North Carolina. Since every individual family had many of the same names, it is provoking to read of Alexander and Jonathan and Samuel and Davis and Zacchaeus and the rest. Cousin Zack and Grandpa Zack and Uncle Zack are about as badly mixed up as the dozens of Abraham Lincolns.

My original county, Calloway, had, in my area, three distinctive names: Allbritten, Stubblefield, and McQuiston. And every family repeated endlessly the same names, so that my father, as the doctor of dozens of them, had difficulty keeping his accounts straight. Among the McQuistons, for example, there must have been a dozen named

"James." Locally, they were known as Big Jim, Little Jim, Coaling Jim(He lived in the "coalings," areas where timber was grown to furnish charcoal for the iron furnaces.), John's Jim, Black Jim(He was very dark-"complected."). One old lady of this clan used to talk about "my Bill's William'swife." Whenever I have come across the name "McQuiston," even to this day, I have found that it originated from the same clan. Both Allbritten and Stubblefield are somewhat more widespread as names.

A few days ago I drove through Bethelridge, Casey County. At once I recalled that this small village was the center of the Wesley clan. In a half century I have known three generations of the family, which is related to the famous John and Charles. And every family I am acquainted with has a John and a Charles. The family must have as much trouble keeping the Johns and the Charleses separate as did the McQuistons in Calloway County. Fortunately, some other names are not so much used, and Josh Wesley is a person and not a name common to a whole tribe. (It is possible that there are a host of Wesleys named Josh; I just do not happen to know the others.)

In looking over not-so-common names that have shown up in my rollbooks, I can place evey one named Veluzat,or Vittitoe, or Rexroat, or Pedigo. Some neighborhood shows up at once when I hear these names. Nov, Miller and Wilson and Jones and Smith and Brown and Johnson and Thompson are so widespread that there is no real distinction in bearing such a name; you might be from Podunk or a big city with such names as these; nobody would likely ask you whether you were of the family of Wilsons that live on Greasy Creek. But look out when you bear the names of McCoy or Hargis or Hatfield; the joke will be on you instantly. The asker might get the same surprise that I had when I asked, trying to be funny, whether So-and-So(a famous feuder) was a relative of the pretty girl who was enrolling in my class. Imagine my surprise when she said, truthfully: "He was my father's uncle."

T+C

"EARTH'S BUT A DESERT DREAR"

I have just come from a program in which a young woman, still less than half my age, testified that the earth is a dreary place, that the world is rapidly going to the devil, that it isn't safe to be on the streets or to live now. That is great news. She must read the scandal sheets and believed every word of them. Or she must not read at all or maybe only printed stuff that agrees with her brand of religion. I tried to keep my head up while she carried on, but it was hard to do, for I do not believe her philosophy. I am no Pollyanna, but I still believe that there is some good in the world, in spite of changing times and doleful texts.

It has seemed queer to me all my life that, in order to appear on the right road, so many people have to bemean the ordinary course of life, to wish for good old times in which "every goose was a swan and every lass a queen." A defeatist attitude like this makes many a young person puzzled, not knowing whether to follow the calm of his neighbors or to stray off after some high-sounding philosophy of "furriners." I was once young and can still recall how puzzled such intellectual flim-flam worried me. I wanted to be a good boy, I had a very clear-cut ambition to be somebody, in spite of poverty and ill health; but, apparently, my ambition was a very wicked one, for I believed that life itself is good, that most of our normal impulses are on the right side, and more would be with just a little encouragement from our elders and our leaders.

When I look back at the so-called good old days, I fail to remember many soul-stirring calls to be active now and here. Some long-lost Eden, some Golden Future, always got in the way. Fidelity had no golden streets, no saints, no self-denying people who could live without work or food. Our folks plowed corn, cut down trees, built log and boxed houses, bowed their heads when somebody else

prayed aloud, paid their "just and honest debts," and somehow got along with all sorts of neighbors. Most of them were too busy to worry much about abstruse theology; a few of the most ignorant ones were the most noted of our fervent arguers. Most of the time we were genuine Arminians, though no one, I suspect, had ever heard of that theological word; Arminius, you recall, preached that what one does in the world helps to achieve his salvation, what the Catholics call "good works." Some half-baked prophet sometimes strayed into our quiet little Fidelity and soon had us, in direct proportion to our ignorance, arguing subjects that nobody knows anything about. The hot months, after corn was laid by and before tobacco-cutting, was just the lull in farm duties for us to get "het up." After a few weeks of this, we "ca'med" down and went on "doing" our religion, until the next year and the next unsettling of our abiding faith in humanity. Between times of zeal we helped a sick neighbor with his corn and tobacco crops, we drove a wagon throughout the neighborhood and took up donations for some poor tenant farmer whose entire stock of earthly belongings had burned up in a fire, we chopped wood for the old maids up the creek and took in food for them to hold them together rather than sending them to the county farm. And, for eleven months or so of the year, we were happy in just being folks, with no theological divisions. Maybe the annual stir-off made us realize more than ever the goodness of human nature and probably made us determine to fight it out on this homely, unrewarded way, whether we could find texts to prove our way or not. And twelve months in the year the old family doctor went his rounds, prevented by his profession from taking sides too ardently, relieving pain, cheering with his good-humored presence probably more than with his calomel and quinine, preaching a doctrine of tolerance and faith that somehow remained after all the fireworks had died down.

"WASPIES"

A rather young acquaintance of mine told me recently that "waspies" have been worse than usual this year and that they seem to be more poisonous. He used the word several times and took me straight back to Fidelity, except that we often said "waspers." He also took me back to a much more remote time, when our outlandish words now with collections of consonants were pronounded smoothly, with vowels between, just as they had been in Old English times. In those same times there were "briddes," now "birds," and "axed," now(and I dare you to say the past tense--"asked"--plainly) "asked." In losing some of our slurred vowels, we lost some ease of speech, that is, those of us who try to speak "English as she is spoken." It really does me good to hear these sounded extra vowels, in the words just mentioned and in "striped." Naturally, I am too big a coward to use them myself, but I love to hear the ones who unconsciously keep alive the older forms of speech. Even a college graduate of my acquaintance once told me that a certain kind of nails "busts" the moulding around doors. And, of course, the moulding was "busted," as anybody can see.

In teaching thousands of people in my course in the English Language, I have often spent some time on this very matter of explaining these left-overs of speech. One student, many years ago, said that the chief value of the course to her was its helping her to understand Grandma, in such words as these and in other usages that were once as proper as hoopskirts or button shoes or stovepipe hats. Many a usage is not to be laughed at merely because it seems strange; it is necessary first to know whether it was once proper or has always hung around on the edges of correct usage and has never become proper.

English, as I often tell my students, is good, bad, and half-good or half-bad. Good English is somewhat like many of our tastes and policies: it is painfully acquired and painfully kept. Smooth language, acceptable to high and low, no matter how easy it seems, is one of the hardest things to learn and keep on learning, for good language, like good manners and good clothes, undergoes changes constantly. Bad English is hard to define, but it is made up of a whole group of usages: words that have gone out of standard use, words that are so new that they are still too technical or strange to be standard, barbarisms (words that have been made up on the basis of words already known but are not yet acceptable--"suspicion" as a verb, for instance), and genuine slang(words pertaining to some sport or game or intimate phase of society but not universally recognized). Many of these words are likely to appear in our spoken English, to be understood for what they are; when we begin to write, we are somewhat hampered, for our readers may not know when we are merely laughing at language. "Critter," in this column, is not to be taken as a literary usage, in spite of its usefulness. "Hound dog" is another expression that good usage frowns upon, but what would you say? The half-good or half-bad usages give me the most trouble with my students. They are not likely to use such vulgarisms as "seen" for "saw" or "taken" for "took," but they do have trouble with their nominatives and objectives: "I, me; he, him; we, us; they, them; she, her." So simple a thing as case seems as far away as China to many of them. "Who, whom" as a usage stands first, I suspect, even though it is simple as A, B, C. I do not know whether to laugh or frown when someone tries to use a correct form and, frankly, does not know what it actually does in a sentence. Some of my students, even after I have trailed them through college, feel that "I" is more aristocratic than "me," in spite of the location of the word.

T&C

"WHY D'DN'T YOU?"

The way a person does anything means, to some people, only a sign of what ought to be his line. Years ago I took with me on one of my bird trips a young college professor, a very shy but able man. We met a number of farmers in the area where I was studying birds. Along the way I picked up some school children and took them as far as I was going. Since I like people, I, quite naturally, talked to everybody ~~about~~ just about everything. On our way home the young college professor said, "Wilson, you ought to be a politician." And yet I was merely acting like myself, with no effort to secure votes or to make people think well of me. I had birded on those farms many times and have now run up the total to nearly six hundred times, but it had never occurred to me to play politics or back-slapping to keep my welcome up.

When I was a very young man, I went home with my college roommate. On Sunday, as was to be expected, we attended the small Baptist church near his home. Some one asked me to comment on the International Sunday School lesson of the day; of course, since I was and am I, I did. Before I left that country church, I learned that I was a young ministerial student. Several people wished me well and were glad that I was to be a preacher. I was firm in saying that I had no such intention, but they piously knew better. And I let them have their way.

In my years of making commencement addresses, I have had enough funny experiences to fill a book. In one place, since I have been connected with a teachers college all my mature life, I was supposed to be a professor of education and was so advertised--Head of the Education Department, Western. After it was in print, of course nothing could be done about it. If a man is an educator, if he teaches in a teachers

college, he is a professor of education; so that is that. There is no use for him to deny it.

Also on a commencement program I had the introduction to end all introductions. The printed program said that I was professor of English, I did not deny it, but the introducer said I was professor of medicine. I know that I may have some appearance of the old family doctor, but that was news to me. I made no effort to correct this impression; it is possible that that neighborhood still thinks that I am a professional far different from what I really am. I am very much interested in the whole field of medicine, I have taken my share of pills and have been shot with everything that comes in guns, but I am afraid that these will not qualify me for a chair of medicine, even internal medicine.

Is it true, then, that certain attitudes belong to certain professions? If so, why would anybody ever suspect that I am anything but a teacher? Looks, gestures, vocabularies, companions, and all the rest become standardized in the minds of many people. If you have these, you are a member of a certain group, no matter how much you deny it. "He looks just like a_____." You can supply the name according to what characteristics you think a profession should have. This is genuine folklore, going back to a time when probably People actually looked their parts more than they do now. In the Middle Ages the robe that you wore probably caused you to take a certain type of step. That would give you away before anyone could see your face. When the rigid caste systems prevailed, a servant probably did walk and act like a servant, and the lord acted like a lord. Except for rare individuals, try your hand at guessing a man's profession by the way he walks and talks and acts.

HOW PEOPLE LOOKED

When I was younger, I spent much time trying to picture how certain great men must have looked. Though I had seen pictures of many of them, I still made more mistakes on my guessing than I would have, probably, if I had never heard tell of the men. Of course, we have been brought up on the tall, vigorous George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. Fortunately, in Lincoln's time there were cameras to show his height as compared with some of the shorter, more compact-built men of the time. But right there we come to the end of our line. Some other tall ones, by contemporary accounts, were Thomas Jefferson, "Long Tom," who would look short on a basketball team now; Daniel Boone, who was just average as a fairly tall man; Andrew Jackson. But we have had our share of short ones, too: Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, Benjamin Franklin. Somehow, I spent my most unrewarding guesses when I tried to figure out the stature of literary men. Wordsworth, of all things, did not look poetic: he was tall and thin and stooped. The vigorous James Russell Lowell was short, stocky, weak-eyed. Hawthorne did not look like a writer of mystery stories; he was not thin and eagle-eyed but good-sized, a handsome man, with a face like that of a successful business executive. I suppose that our foolishness refuses to believe that people seldom look their parts. When I was a very small child, one of my uncles dug up some old tintypes of Mother's parents and had some pictures made from them. I was completely flabbergasted when I saw the long-awaited pictures; the two old people were stiff, homely, anything but the great people I had supposed them to be. Of course, I was just a child and was not a good judge of what anyone was supposed to be, but I was strangely like lots of people who refuse to accept facts when they are dealing with famous people or relatives.

This corroborative evidence of the tintypes and the other pictures taken in the early days of photography ought to make us a little more chary about believing things that we have been told about other times. Take one of the best-looking people you know and dress him up in quaint, old-fashioned clothes, and see what you have. Or, as some cartoonists have done, dress George Washington in modern clothes and see whether you would recognize him on the street. Making allowances for slight differences in speech because of a changing world, we might also find that some of the great-great ones were astonishingly like you and me, neither very fine-looking nor hideously ugly. Folk-minded people refuse to find common denominators in viewing their heroes. Paul Bunyan, though an exaggeration and a very modern one, has many of the same characteristics that my elders, my teachers, my Sunday School teachers, and a great many of my textbooks found in the great and near-great of other times. Every society must have its myths. Its great men must be supermen, not homely, plain people like the rest of us. I can recall how much some people suffered, half a generation ago, when truth-tellers who wrote history admitted that Franklin was rather pudgy, that Washington's false teeth did not fit well, that Lincoln's clothes needed pressing. Of course, a certain group of writers tried to tell us that these so-called great ones were not great because they had these very common characteristics. Even the de-bunkers could not help thinking that a really great person is somehow removed from the simple ways of the rest of us. With thinking people, however, it does us good to know that our heroes looked very much like us, had some of our ornery habits, used language not always impeccable, but, in spite of all these earthy things, saw a greater world ahead than any that had yet been realized. I wonder sometimes whether we may not have dressed up the saints a bit too much; they may not have looked their parts any more than did short little Napoleon or gawky Abraham Lincoln or homely old Socrates.

T+C

NOT MERELY NATURALISTS

In the earlier days of this column I was often told that folklore is something connected only with ignorant people, that it does not concern the rest of us. And yet some of the very people who said this are as much victims of folk thinking as the remotest dweller up the holler. Here are some folk things that have come under my observation among well-to-do and well-educated people lately.

Many people, not just a few, have declared their belief in planting a garden or killing hogs according to the phases of the moon. They are not the sort of people you would want to contradict; they might have some influence on your social or financial standing. In the summer of this very year I said something in fun about the right phase of the moon and got a cold stare from some excellent people. I forthwith changed the subject.

Not long ago, when I told of having camped out in Mammoth Cave National Park within a few feet of the graves of some people whom I had known slightly and whose descendants I have known well, a woman who was driving a much more expensive car than I have ever been able to own said that she would not have slept a wink in such spooky surroundings. I laughingly said that these same people had never harmed me while they were alive and I did not fear them dead; but she still shook her head and declared she did not want to invite trouble.

Not too long ago a well-dressed man of a good family told me of the patent medicine he is using, medicine that I know to be as good as and no better than branch water. I tried to look sympathetic and asked him what doctor had prescribed the remedy; no doctor had done so, but some other fellow with the same trouble had highly recommended this nostrum. I have refrained from saying what the trouble was, for I would not want to hurt the feelings of a fine and well-to-do family.

When I sprouted a crop of carbuncles, long since this column began, a fine man of my acquaintance prescribed nine buckshot, one a night, as a sure-shot cure. When I laughed somewhat unbelievingly, the man showed at once that I was making fun of something sacred. I thanked him for his information, but I did not take nine buckshot or even one. My family doctor gave me some sort of shot, probably the essence of buckshot, and the offending boils vanished.

Probably the worst offenders are those who have dogs or cats who can all but talk. Not being, at present, a dog owner, I may be a bit callous to dog intelligence. However, some of my dog-owning friends have dogs that would make most of us human beings seem dumb. I will admit that dogs have a lot of animal intelligence, some more than others. I will admit that they can associate a lot of things with the tone of voice of the trainer, but right there I break with my friends and will probably stay broken. No wonder the primitive people talked to wild animals as if they were alive and often apologized to them for having to take their lives to stave off hunger.

About five years ago I chanced to be at a watering place on the Fourth of July. A visiting judge from some county far away was asked to say something appropriate to the day. He gave a speech, intonations and all, that would have made the earliest American, probably the earliest human being, happy. He didn't leave out a trite phrase that has arisen in the years since Fourth of July oratory began: Constitution, Bill of Rights, our Founding Fathers, our brave boys, the American way of life, our virtuous women, our stable institutions, our godly mothers, and on and on. What was that speech but accumulated folklore? Maybe if I had not heard so many speeches in my time, most of them dull, I would not have fidgeted so while the learned judge exhausted the English vocabulary. But I had heard it all, under almost all circumstances. It was a rehashing of hot air that had accumulated ever since hot air began.

TOO GOOD FOR THIS WORLD

Once or twice a year now, and many more times formerly, I run into somebody who very loudly proclaims himself, in so many words, as too good for this world. Of course, he does not phrase it thus; he usually declares that the world is a very bad place and that he has had great trouble escaping from its wicked influence. The inference is that he has escaped, but that the rest of us have not. He usually declares himself very sad over this tragedy, but the way he talks and acts, he is secretly glad that he has found the formula and the others have not. This is such an old, old story that you would think it would not be repeated so often; it would seem that everybody would have heard it and would try to invent some new angle of approach to good living or disdain of the world. But that is folklore, anyway; it loves the familiar pattern and often imagines that nothing like this has ever occurred before.

A whole history could be written of the successive prophecies of the end of all things. One to three outbreaks have come in just about every century. Every kind of attitude has been taken, religious, economic, educational, social, even pseudo-scientific. Since things are forever changing, people assume that all change is for the worse. At once a philosophy can be built up. It does not take long to find illustrations, even to prove that the world is about to be consumed by fire, right in our time. I am writing this on a very hot day; a little encouragement might make me declare that we are about to fall into the sun and be consumed as a spider would if it fell into a fire. Excuse that figure; it came directly from Jonathan Edwards, who certainly felt that we are in a bad way and not getting any better.

Some outbreaks of this spirit have practically ~~vanished~~ extinguished

all efforts of the younger generation to start something new or even to hope for a way out. Our South, the kind that orators have worn pretty thin, has done just this thing as a part of its folkways until it must feel somewhat cheap and silly. My generation was told so often that everything of any importance ended with Lee's Surrender that many of my acquaintances seemed to believe this. They lived long lives with their eyes turned backwards, refusing to believe that anything good can ever happen again.

One of the preachers in my faith told me, forty years ago, that his father, also a minister in the same faith, once said in a Methodist Conference that children are born good and that society should do its best to keep them good. Many of his brethren asked the bishop to turn the offending preacher out of the conference. That was radicalism; everybody knew then that all children are born wicked and must have the wickedness beaten out of them by one method or another. About the same time, in Kentucky, according to the historians, a person was accused of witchcraft and brought before a court. A very daring judge, probably trembling when he did so, threw out the case. He got many a dirty look and some threats; of course, there were and are witches, the critics said and believed.

The funniest combination of antiquated philosophy I have seen lately concerned a person who absolutely knew that he had arrived, that he didn't and couldn't do wrong any more. I could detect in his very manner, however, a sort of what in me would be wicked; he seemed to gloat inwardly at how many of us would perish while he sailed, smug and smirking, through space. Was that a good attitude? Is that a part of being perfect and free from wickedness? If I felt that way or you did, we would think it far removed from goodness. Being too good for this world nearly always has some fly in the ointment; the ones who find themselves so far ahead are not often very lovely folks.

BIRDS, GOOD AND BAD LUCK

Birds have played a big part in the superstitions of America. I suspect that most of the superstitions were brought over here and adapted to species that seemed to be like the ones back home. Rather oddly, sometimes it is possible to find the same bird a good luck omen in one area and a bad luck sign elsewhere. For example, on my ridge in Calloway County the Whip-poor-will was a bird of good luck: if, when you first heard it in spring, you would lie right down where you were, roll over three times, and make a wish, that wish would come true. On a ridge in plain view from our barnyard the Whip-poor-will was always looked upon as evil; it was disastrous for it to sing near a house in which a person was sick; that song was likely to be a deathblow.

Night birds, in general, are birds of ill omen. Just any squawk at night was identified as the call of a Nighthawk, back at Fidelity; no one meant what we now call the Nighthawk or the Bullbat, but some mysterious bird that was out breezing around when all honest birds and folks should have been at home in bed. Owls have seemed in all ages wiser than they or anything else is. Fortunately, a Chinese proverb says that if an owl were to brag about anything, it would brag about catching mice. Some other wag, American in origin, has said that owls get a lot of reputation for wisdom when they merely do not say much because they have little to say anyway. I have known people who shivered with a strange kind of cold fear when they heard even mockingbirds singing at night. Fortunately, that type of fear seems to be on the decline now. In the thrill of early spring many birds sing at night besides the regular night birds; not many people look upon these night songs with superstition; I suppose the beauty of the season makes everything possible and believable.

It is good luck to have some birds build around the house and yard.

When the white men came to America, it was already common to see a pole hung full of gourds for the Purple Martins. The white men soon accepted this Indian custom and loved to believe that there was some good reason for luring these active birds. Also a very early custom was the building of bird houses for Bluebirds. When most people were wasteful of wild life, there were some who cherished their Bluebirds and bragged about having them around.

Along with developing appreciation for birds often went, and still goes, cruelty and misunderstanding. The Kingbird, popularly called the Bee Martin, has always been accused of eating bees and is still so accused, even by people who should have some respect for careful investigations by the Fish and Wildlife Bureau of the United States Department of Agriculture that show the bird not guilty or no more guilty than many another species that has never been suspected. The most outrageous hatred is for hawks, of any species. Though an occasional hawk has captured a small chicken, most species are innocent and may even be helpful by destroying field mice and rodents that would eat grain and other farm products. Many people whom I have known have taken a fiendish delight in killing hawks, any hawks. This partly accounts for the whole group being quite rare in my area. The beautiful and innocent middle-sized Broad-winged Hawk is killed quite as often as the possibly less innocent Red-shouldered. A hawk is a hawk, and if it is alive; kill it! That seems to be the philosophy of many people.

In some parts of the state it is good luck for Barn Swallows to build in barns. Since we did not have the species in my area in my childhood, I did not know this superstition until after I came into the Cavernous Limestone area. Maybe there is another side to this good luck, for the species, wherever I have known it, very much prefers large barns; maybe its presence indicates that the owner is a well-to-do fellow; that would be nature's own way of indicating his good luck.

CYCLES OF SETTLEMENT

Historians of American life have made much of the regular cycles by which our country was settled. Especially the frontiers repeated almost endlessly the same pattern. Chance explorers came, sometimes actually looking for gold or fertile land or just roving. Hunters and trappers and traders with the Indians followed. Sometimes this cycle was a long one, for the western-moving procession might bypass an area for a generation or two. Then would come crude early settlers, mere squatters, who did little except to erect some makeshift cabins, clear small areas, hunt and fish, raise a little corn and some pigs, and then move on to other free land when the permanent settlers arrived. We who lived in the Jackson Purchase were able to see almost the whole cycle, since the area had been opened for settlement only in 1818 and did not actually fill up until nearly the time of the Civil War. Explorers were gone, long ago, but crude people very little removed from squatters were still around. They lived on someone's land, but they did little to cultivate a farm. They hunted, trapped, dug ginseng and other wild roots, and borrowed whatever they needed beyond these sources of income. Soap and water seemed no part of their needs. Some of the people who were in the practice area of my father, the country doctor, were almost as primitive as the hillbillies described so incisively by William Byrd in his HISTORY OF THE DIVIDING LINE, a record of his supervising the boundary line between North Carolina and Virginia in 1728. Even after the wild animals had declined greatly, some people hunted and trapped almost fanatically, trying to hold on to their passing occupation.

A type of migrant in my area, where crosstie-making was an art, were professional tie-hacks, men whose whole job was this skilled work. They had no permanent home, because they followed the need for ties and left when a tract of timber was worked over. Often they were

crude and untrustworthy, even though they sometimes had more ready money than more settled people. To call a person a tie-hack was almost an insult; it was hard to think of people who lived on a lower scale.

Periodically, in my childhood, there would be a saw-mill period. Though there was nearly always a mill within reach, someone would move a mill into unworked timber and stay as long as the cutting was good. Some of the group who followed this work were wanderers, wandering from tract of timber to tract of timber like the tie-hacks. Years after a family who ran a sawmill at Fidelity had left the area, I ran into the survivors of it in another area, sixty miles away, living in shacks in the Mississippi River bottom and working up timber. They had not apparently seen much soap since my earliest memories of them.

Farming itself has certainly undergone cycles of change. It was still customary until a few years ago, in certain parts of the county I have lived in so long, to clear an area, wear it out, let it grow up in persimmon and sassafras bushes, and then move on to another clearing. I have seen whole square miles of what should have been good land reduced to marginal land within a few years and unnecessarily, too. It is not long since there grew up a desire to keep the land that is already cleared, keep the woods that are left, and try to develop both of them. Already, in some of the places where I go to study birds, it is becoming evident that farmers have decided to stay on the land and not wear it out and move on. Wholesome education by county agents and conservation officers is taking effect. It would be great to live a hundred years more and see what will be done with growing timber, just as we now grow grain and tobacco and stock. In a neighboring state I camped in a state forest that is already marketing small timber for pulpwood from an area where there were only red gulleys thirty years ago. Writers have not made tree-growing as romantic as was the clearing way of the forests, but some one will tell the story of reclamation and make us realize that we still live in romantic times.

T+C

"AND THIS IS UNCLE GEORGE"

A vacation trip into some of the most scenic and most historical parts of America brought to my mind the part tradition still plays in our lives. We educated ones pretend that we live somewhat above mere oral learning, but I fear we are kidding ourselves. The history I learned first came from human mouths, not from documents. Recently I camped at Columbus-Belmont Battlefield State Park, on the Mississippi River in Hickman County. All around us were the earthworks thrown up by the Southerners in the early days of the Civil War. Near by was the huge anchor, with some of its large chain attached, which once rested on pontoons anchored in the mighty river and forming a barrier to the stoutest boats. In the many, many years since I could first listen to oral history I have read and reread about the campaign to open the rivers of the Confederacy: the Cumberland, the Tennessee, the Mississippi. But it was the echo of tradition that welled up in me as I watched the sun go down over the peaceful river where men had once fought each other. I hummed "The Year of Jubilo," a Civil War song that grew out of the occupation of that fort by the "Lincum gunboats." I got that song, not from a collection but from my mother's lips. She, a small teen-age girl, heard, over the miles, the roar of the big guns that finally brought about the fall of Columbus; she heard, by word of mouth, the song that grew up there. It was many years on into my grown-up life before I heard that song again and learned its history. Columbus Battlefield was at hand as I camped, a battlefield composed of many layers of history and tradition, but the tradition came first.

As I lay and looked at the stars over the once-famous fort, I could not help thinking of the many phases of our lives that have come to us by tradition, just as that battle first lived in my life.

There was the old family album, for instance. A stiff tintype looked out at me. "That was Uncle George," someone said, and then went into an account of what the uncle was and did. His career came and ended long before I arrived at Fidelity; I could know of this chiefly by tradition, for Uncle George was not important enough to warrant any account of him by a writer; he did not even write letters; maybe he couldn't write at all. But he was a stalwart pioneer, able to take his place on the long trek from North Carolina; he helped to clear the very acres that were still being occupied by his descendants; his modest little grave-marker was already becoming gray with stains and lichens. And every family had similar Uncle Georges, not great in the history of the world, but basic to the simple little civilizations that were transplanted to a new wilderness and kept alive by loving hands like some precious plant from Grandmother's garden.

There is history, and again there is history. The army dispatches from the great battle or the important capture of a fort are still available; it is not too difficult to find the facts about our big battles. But the feel of the time, the record of the battle in human hearts, in human ears, in aching longing for the end of the war--it would take a historian of many parts to make us feel these. Maybe the wars we have had later have been so well documented that we cannot get the feel of things that our Civil War boys brought home; printed matter and documents galore authenticate events of World Wars I and II. But "The Year of Jubilo" and "Have You Heard the Latest News?" another song about Columbus and its great fort, got to me and to my generation by word of mouth and not from any pages of a book. And no one can document heartaches and fears and wild longings for peace.

SCRAMBLED HISTORY

My traveling companion and I were standing at the grave of Kit Carson, at Taos, New Mexico. Tourists by the dozen, that Sunday afternoon, came and went in a few minutes. One family, a rather prosperous one, consisted of father, mother, a boy, and a girl--a typical American family. The girl, probably about in the eighth grade, said, "Daddy, who was Kit Carson?" "A famous outlaw," replied Daddy, with all the assurance of a man who owns a fine car and is away on a two-weeks vacation trip with his family. The girl seemed satisfied at Daddy's great knowledge and asked no more questions. Nobody by the grave said anything. Kit Carson slept on, maligned but justified.

Hollywood has done much to make us forget that the Old West had some characters who were not outlaws, some people who, like Carson, did yeoman service in opening a vast new world. The Hollywood formula seems to be that if a fellow was not a famous gun man, he should have been, that only sissies could confess that they had never killed several Americans, not counting Mexicans and Indians. Poor Carson has suffered as has our Daniel Boone from would-be makers of myth. Tradition has so labored that it seems to make no difference whether it was William H. Bonney("Billy the Kid") or Kit Carson or William H. Cody ("Buffalo Bill") or Jesse James who robbed the Glendale train and got shot by the dirty little coward."

To any casual observer it is obvious that our American life has been a succession of passing institutions. The mere wanderer gave way before the explorer, who in turn disappeared before the settler. And there were several waves of settlers, from the first rude squatters to the occupiers of the land, who had come to stay and to found a kingdom. The ancient cowboy, for example, would be as much out of place today in most of the West as he would have been in the stylish company of James Fenimore Cooper and his set when they were producing and reading

the great novels and plays about pioneer life in the East.

In spite of the numerous excellent regional dramas now being given each summer in focal places of American history, I am afraid that most people make all our predecessors of one piece--wild cowboys, sheriffs, bear-hunters, straight shooters, picturesque combinations of Natty Bumppo, Buffalo Bill, Jesse James, Daniel Boone, and George M. Cohan. That is, our early history seems to have been, in many minds, a spirited pageant, with a well-paid producer, brought fresh from New York and Broadway so that he will understand better the quaint, authentic history of our neck of the woods. Our predecessors just had to be heroes, theatrical ones, that could ride and shoot and fight or sing or dance at a moment's notice.

I can recall how disappointed I was as a child when I learned that some of our very commonplace men had done great things. They were, in my time, very unheroic in appearance and speech. Most of them were getting old and further aided nature's decay by neglecting to get a haircut or shave or bath very often. And yet, we were told, Uncle John, for example, had done great things at Shiloh, that he had rallied a broken company by grabbing a Confederate flag that had been shot off its pole, yelled to the stragglers, and led them to a local victory. We doubted this almost as much as we doubted Uncle Clark's accounts of his pacing mare that paced over seven "kivered wagons" coming down the Underwood Hill. Neither looked like our conception of a hero, especially one from Civil War days, when all men were heroes. Maybe no opportunity ever offered itself again to Uncle John comparable with the one at Shiloh; anyway, his bedraggled little farm showed no evidences of heroism; Uncle John could not afford to do dirty farm work when foxes were to be chased and liquor to be consumed. Maybe the reason I noticed the man at Carson's grave is that I once knew Uncle John and his unheroic life after unexcelled bravery at Shiloh.

NEITHER HIGH NOR LOW

In the many years that I have written this column I have read or reread many accounts of childhood days of people who had presence of mind enough to set down their memories before their cherished customs had vanished. In reviewing many of these books recently, I was struck with the point of view taken by many of the writers. A few writers give us a picture of well-to-do small town or city life, with all the dodads and thingumbobs that well-to-do people once had. A far larger number tell of back-breaking privations in remote areas where people had risen only a little above "Pithecanthropus erectus." It has struck me as strange that neither very rich nor very poor people represent the average level of our world, now or formerly. The most of you who read this column, if any such are still left after twenty-three years, grew up in an intermediate stage, about as far from actual want as from riches. As compared with yourself now or the society in which you move, you certainly might have been poor; but in those days wealth as such had few values. With your little bit of good things of this world, you were probably average or above in your little Fidelity and had no reason to apologize for not being rich. Being as good as the average, or maybe a little better, gave you a feeling of belonging that no amount of hard knocks has ever overcome. You did not have to climb socially; you were already as high as the average level of your section. There seemed no advantage in trying to wedge your way up any farther; like the old lady of Boston who did not travel; "You were already there."

One thing that even historians often fail to consider is that in most country communities of the eighteen-nineties there was a democracy that overcame just about everything. Of course, some people were not socially acceptable, but you attended the country

school with them, you matched them in contests of strength or agility at school or the country store, you worked with them in the fields, you helped them bury their dead or build their log houses or even worked their fields for them when they were unable to do so. You might not visit them in their homes, but you would invite them to eat with you when there was dinner on the ground at the local church. And your daddy, if he were at all like mine, would have thrashed you if you had shown any sort of toploftiness toward these people. Today, among many of these families, the second, third, or fourth generation is wholly equal with the best of other days. With more education, more contact with the world, more money to spend, they can and do hold their heads up as high as grown people as they did, and rightly, when you played Wolf Over the River or Dare Base with them and admired their athletic skills.

Sometimes I wonder at the small caste system that we once knew. An outsider would hardly have detected it at all. It really was not very important, except in the eyes of some fond parents, mothers especially. My father, as the doctor of good and bad and such high and low as we knew, was, I believe, the most consistent democrat I ever knew, without ever becoming a mere leveler. Merit was merit, no matter where it lodged or how unprepossessing might be its owner or his house. The illiterates and the barely educated made up a very large part of our Fidelity in my early days; nobody had an eighth-grade diploma. Similarly, no one was well-off; the richest men of our community were far below the level in money of many a tenant farmer today. While we tried to make something of our little ways, especially what we had or what we knew, most of our efforts fell pretty flat. Maybe the test of lifting well at a barn-raising or log-rolling had some merit after all.

"THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH"

In one of the most memorable passages in Tennyson's "Morte D'Arthur," the dying king says,

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new."

Though this sentence might be taken as a sort of motto for this whole series of articles, it got a fresh meaning yesterday afternoon. I was waiting for the plane that would bring my wife from Portland, Oregon, where she had spent a short summer vacation with our daughter. Several people whom I knew were ~~also~~ waiting to welcome members of their family or expected visitors. But there were also more than a hundred others who were not going anywhere or expecting anybody; they had come to see the Eastern Airlines plane land and take off, and they stayed through the show. Practically the whole parking area was full of cars, and every car was full of people, from great-grandmothers to tiny babies. And I hope that every one got his money's worth. After all, airliners are still so new to us that they excite wonder, especially when they show that they can land without crashing and can rise, with all their weight, as gracefully as a Turkey Buzzard. Though I saw the people in cars and heard them discussing newer and ever newer models of cars that they hoped to own, I actually was seeing horse-drawn vehicles and hearing horse-and-buggy-days conversation, for I was back at the railroad station of a generation or two ago. The old order changes, but human curiosity lingers on.

In my early days away from home I often went away to school on a Sunday, for that day was easiest to get me to the railroad station. Consequently, I always think of a train ride in terms of Sunday afternoon, when a large percentage of the town or village turned out to see the train come in and a few fortunate ones get on or off. The black

smoke, properly laden with cinders, rose in great masses, the whistle shrieked, and there was a tingle in every nerve of the people who had come to see the train. And away went the train into the unknown, far beyond anywhere that most of us had ever been. But the next Sunday the same crowd was assembled, trying not to get nervous while waiting to hear the whistle or see the black smoke as the train rounded the curve. "Them was the days!" The very important ones who got on or off the train knew their importance, even though their eyes might be smarting from cinders and their clothes pretty soiled from the same source. Abraham setting out for the Land of Canaan was probably no more envied than these world-travelers, who had probably come from thirty or forty miles away.

Some five years ago I went back to my county seat town to a national meeting of folklorists. People had come from a dozen states or more. One prominent author and folklorist had come all the way from New York City, but he could not arrive by train, for trains—passenger trains—had been discontinued on the line that runs though my native county. He had to fly to a good-sized town near by and ~~be taxied down~~ come by bus to the meeting, since the town did not have at that time an airport. How times have changed! Now, if that meeting had been held fifty years ago, the prominent author, who is a bit theatrical, could have shown his ability as an actor when he alighted from the train, handed his bags to the fellow who ran the bus uptown, and climbed up the steps into the plush-seated vehicle and watched the world go by as the matched horses did their best to trot along the slightly-paved streets. As it was, he had to come into town like a commoner, on a bus, which takes no account of rich or poor and leaves you at the station without any black smoke or loud skriek of a whistle. What next? I record events that have happened, not prophetic ones. And unlike the sun dial, with its quaint motto, I record some events that have a sad or gloomy side, for "grow we must," says Holmes, "Even if we outgrow all we love."

"WORTH A HORSE"

When our ancestors bet each other a horse that something was true, that was really putting up some good collateral. Now I have to explain to my students why such an expression ever grew up. And I can see why they do not know the value of a horse as a standard of measurement.

In the summer of 1957 I camped in the Southwest, from the Mississippi to sagebrush and deserts and horned toads. Though I was in one of the great areas where the cowboy really was a figure in American history, I saw a mere dozen or so cowboys on some of the large ranches and a few more horses, because I drove by some dude ranches where youngsters can imagine themselves to be brave and hard riders of another time. But a mere drive in one county in a T-model a quarter of a century ago would have revealed more horses than my 3400-mile camping trip brought. The horse, except for those few remaining cowboys who have rough territory that a jeep cannot negotiate and the proprietors of dude ranches, is largely a memory of Grandpa.

About the time I was writing the earliest articles in this series, say 1925, it was easy for me to glance up from my typewriter and see men riding by and even to see a farmer riding one horse and leading two or three others to be traded on Jockey Row. If horses travel by my house now, they are royally conveyed in trucks; there is too much danger from cars to risk a valuable horse on the highway being propelled by his own steam. Some ritzy horses do go by, all fastened up in a cage, probably no happier than the lions and bears at a circus.

It takes a certain kind of tolerance of change to get adjusted to a world without horses. We oldsters knew what horse-power was long before it named some mysterious something under the hood of a car. We had seen that horse power grow from colthood to mature horsehood. We had been a part of this strange evolution, for we had cared for the colt and its mother, we had helped break the frisky young animal to the saddle and the shafts. Our heartstrings were tied up with the horse, our means of transportation, our

badge of respectability. Even an old plow horse was infinitely better than all the farm implements put together. How would you like to ~~have~~ try all to dig up with a grubbing hoe what a mere plug horse could plow in one day? I have tried to hoe corn and must confess that it seems a slow way of getting anywhere. When machinery relieved the horse of most of his onerous duties, we were at first so glad to have our new-bought toys that we were not too sorry to see Old Dobbin go. Now, after getting a few sane breaths, we have begun to evaluate our old stand-by and wonder why we did not see his importance. Not that any of us are ready to sell or give away our cars and go back to horse-flesh; we are merely learning to put proper values on what stood behind our civilization, meager though it may have been.

To an old-timer like me nothing seems to have changed more in the last half generation than our appreciation for the backgrounds of our civilization. Museums, parks, books, feature articles, songs, stories, novels--what doesn't revive our knowledge of and interest in our past? For my recent birthday my wife gave me a very valuable book, full of authentic pictures and historical accounts of America as it has developed, from Jamestown to the present. Nostalgic memories cluster over every page. These were our folks that landed from small sailing ships, our folks who built rude huts in the wilderness and tried to ward off disease and starvation and hostile Indians, our folks who drove covered wagons to Kentucky and on into the strange West, our folks who lived in log huts or sod shanties or in holes in the banks until better places could be built. Some of these same people have passed completely out of our national life and can live only in memories and historical revivals of interest; others, slightly changed, are still going on treks to unknown places, quite as strange as any Oregon Trail or rounding Cape Horn. If we are wise, we will never forget what they did in bringing to our own time the traditions and achievements of the race. Crude, unlearned, even rough, many of them bear the same relation to our modern lives as does the humble plow horse to our newest tractor or as does the wagon horse ~~does~~ to our most powerful automobile. I sincerely hope that "horse-power" as an idea will long endure, even into a time when no one will have ever seen a horse in the flesh.

"THE PLACE WHEREON THOU STANDEST"

Since I have been a mature man, I have had many opportunities to visit great places in America, places where history was made. Since most of my free time comes only in the summer vacation, I have seen most of the historical spots when flowers and green leaves set off their calm beauties. I have seldom visited in cold winter any very historical place, even though I rather feel that all of us should go to Valley Forge in the winter to understand a little the sufferings of Washington's army so long ago.

Without exception, all my historical places have seemed quiet and peaceful, no more beautiful and impressive than thousands of places that have had no spectacular events occurring in or near them. Jamestown Island is such a place; it takes a lot of imagination to picture John Smith and the rest and to feel the historic importance of the holy ground. My specialty, I suppose, has been battlefields, most of them now beautifully kept as reminders of our past. Here where a noble shaft rises amid gorgeous flowers, half-trained lads met other half-trained lads and slew each other, blood of the same blood, flesh of the same flesh. Often these same boys had never smelled powder before, had never had any serious or hardening experiences in learning to kill. And few of them could have made out any case for themselves in the dreadful work they were doing; some indefinite call to duty or some compulsion of law brought them into contact with other boys exactly like themselves. And the sod is green where they died, and markers tell of their strange bravery in the fields and woods where there is no danger today. Nature has healed over the scars; the hill that was to be taken, the fort that was to be destroyed, the hidden mine that blew dozens of their enemies to bits--all these seem as harmless as the bird songs in the trees that have succeeded the ones that were cut down to build forts or were broken down by cannon shot. Some minor place, not known beyond a few counties, like Gettysburg or Pittsburg Landing becomes a shrine, a place where history was made, where

our ideals survived because of ~~&~~ or in spite of human blood.

A different type of historical place that has appealed to me, quite naturally, has been the home of a great man, a poet, a novelist, a dramatist, a painter. Sometimes it is impressive for its own sake, an architectural wonder, a house typical of a time and place. At other times it is a humble place, suggesting neither greatness nor un-greatness, the sort of house ~~it~~ in which most of us were born. But this person born here was different. A mere house could not suggest his value to the race. It might be a crude log cabin, the very one or a very similar one to the mere pen of logs in which Lincoln was born. Sometimes it may be a substantial, but old-time, house of a sturdy farmer, built by a Quaker man of no especial fame, but in this same old log house was born a John Greenleaf Whittier. It might be a substantial palace for that age, like Mount Vernon, which Washington had inherited from his brother. But, whether humble or simple or elegant, it has been hard for me and for many another tourist to comprehend the mysterious ability of the boy who was born or who lived there. By what combination of events did he arrive at his greatness, his ability to open up new worlds for himself and for us?

With no especial morbidness, I have also visited many graves of prominent people: many of the great New England writers and thinkers: Emerson and Thoreau and Hawthorne; great Founders of our nation: Washington, Jefferson, Jackson, and the others; picturesque characters of our many-sided life like Will Rogers and Kit Carson. There is a sort of sameness about all graves, as if this were nature's way of showing us that all of us are "equal in the earth at last"; but somehow I cannot forget the tiniest variation in these last resting places of people who have mattered. Before the grave was dug, this was just a spot of earth. After it has closed over the remains of a great person, it is eternally different, for hills and fields and flowers and animals ultimately get their values from mankind, not from any innate values of their own.

"BUGS, AND WORMS, AND ANTS"

In one of Eugene Field's poems on boy life, he mentions how "Little girls are scared to death of bugs, and worms, and ants." In Fidelity it was not alone little girls that were so badly frightened; many older people fairly trembled in their boots at the sight--or even the idea--of certain small animal life. We could kill tobacco worms with a relish; we could put earthworms on fish-hooks with no tremors; we could catch lightning-bugs and hold them in our hands. But many another small animal had the drop on us; we just did not touch it if we could help ourselves.

I suppose that the group of small animals belonging to the Centipede or Milliped group scared us most. They were supposed to be deadly poisonous; most of us avoided them as we would have avoided a Cotton-mouth Moccasin or a Copperhead. I can recall no data on victims of these many-footed animals, but we still felt that we were in dangerous company when we saw one of these. There are people--but Fidelity did not have them--who attribute some strange evil to Thousand-legs and their friends. In the same county it was believed that if one of these crawled across your flesh, right there the tissues would die and rot. In some places, in our state, people believe that if one of these wriggling, footy things sees a person's teeth, said teeth will fall out. Moral: "Keep your mouth closed when you may be near many-footed critters."

Any one who has ever watched a Praying Mantis will agree that it looks to be more than it really is. In the first place, it can turn its head around just like folks. It is predatory and seems unafraid of insects and such like much bigger than it. To watch it devour a big fat grass-hopper is to see genuine wildness at work. That queer fellow gorges itself as if it were a cannibal enjoying a lunch of "long pig." Naturally, we children were afraid of this insect and would not be reassured that it was harmless except to other insects. It just looked too uncanny.

In some higher levels of animal life there was enough of the odd and strange to make us afraid. Many a person I knew would have starved to death before he would have eaten frog legs. And even more people could have been run out of the county if they had been chased by a bad boy with a mud puppy in his hands. Once when my sister and were digging up a flower bed, we uncovered a harmless little salamander. Something about its bright eyes scared us nearly frantic. We took turns stamping on the little fellow until he was merely a reddish stain on the soil. The other children of the neighborhood had told us such frightful stories about mud puppies that we did not take any chances of getting ourselves poisoned or eaten up by such monsters.

"Death-watch beetles" often scared people out of their wits. If these creatures clicked in the wall of the house between the weather-boarding and the ceiling, especially when some one of the family was sick, that was it! It would be advisable to go order a coffin; death was only around the corner.

Many times in this column I have spoken of the fears that many people have when they are around snakes of any sort. Around the Fidelity of my childhood this folk fear amounted to almost a mania. The sight of a snake, even a perfectly harmless one, would make strong men lose their poise; they would even run; no snake, however beneficial, was safe in that time and place. And the killer of even a small snake was a hero, especially if he stamped it with his foot. We had a few poisonous Cotton-mouths and Copperheads, but, if you had heard the stories that went the rounds, you would have thought that we were in constant danger of losing our lives from dangerous Garter and Black and Chicken snakes, all of them as dangerous as a dominecker chicken. Always, in the background, there were the two great mythological snakes: the Joint and the Hoop, one a freakish circus performer, the other a wicked and subtle enemy of every living thing.

THE "SIMPLE" LIFE

Sentimental writers and speakers often indulge in some very great rhetoric describing the simple life of plain people, forgetting or never knowing how complicated such a life is. You and I, with our moderate amount of education, have great faith in the reasonableness of things and, therefore, seldom worry too much over things that cannot be helped. We regard the universe as fairly sensible; we are willing to believe that, even though we may not know all the answers, there are such answers. Cause and effect seem obvious in our worlds, and we still believe in causes in times when things just seem to happen with nothing behind them.

The folk, such as we still may be and as we certainly were once, have their system of cause and effect which, though often unlike ours, works unfailingly or seems to. When you and I get sick, we probably regard our indisposition as an ailment of some organ, brought about by too much food, too little sleep, too little exercise, or too much, or any other good reason. The doctor thinks so, too, and advises us accordingly. But there are plenty of people who know that these same aches and pains are caused by some evil-eyed person who wishes us harm, who is envious of us, who has merely to give us a look, and we start hurting. Such wicked people have to be fought by mysterious devices, such as charms worn around the neck, by conjure bags worn or buried in the right places to ward off evil, by hocus-pocus sayings, often nonsensical in words, to stop the bad ones before they do damage. Sometimes evil can be disposed of by stuff to drink or to rub on, but such stuff as no book of medicine now recognized would approve of. And there still may be a good many people who get a shot of penicillin from a reputable doctor and then, to be sure the evil seizure may be thwarted, go home and take a folk remedy, potent as branch water.

When I think of the innumerable signs of bad and good luck, I know that my life is simple; I cannot worry myself by remembering all such things; it is cheaper to get some medicine or consult some doctor or lawyer or other professional. But the folkish person must carry in his head loads of this sort of thing. And only the one who keeps the thousand and one customs will succeed at his task, will escape the fearful punishments that come to those who violate sacred superstitions. One of my ex-neighbors used to run through almost dozens of beliefs before he would attempt to do anything. He was an industrious man, but he did not want to lose any energy doing something against the signs. Every bit of work on his farm was done according to the signs. I cannot recall that his crops or his stock or his garden or his roofs--all done according to the phases of the moon and similar signs--differed noticeably from those on farms where crops were planted when the soil was workable, regardless of the signs. And the rest of us were saved a lot of worry; we plowed and planted and watched for results, with quite a different philosophy from that of our neighbor.

Mark Twain, you know, said that the parts of the Bible that worried him most were the ones he understood, not the ones he did not understand. And yet folkish people keep on creating troubles, unhappy at life if it seems understandable. Only this week I saw a man bothered past endurance because he could not get others to agree with him on a disputed passage that only a scholar and a very great one could discuss. I can read several languages and understand two spoken languages besides my own, but it never occurred to me to worry about what seemed perfectly clear to this man but not to his friends. Like Mark Twain, for better or for worse, I have more difficulty with the passages in the Bible and elsewhere that are clear enough for anyone. It seemed to me to be making a mountain out of a very small molehill.

TITLES OF HONOR

Nothing has ever amused me more than the almost universal tendency to apply unauthorized titles of honor or respect to people that seem outstanding. There is nothing new in this, but each folk unit does this bowing and scraping in its own way. It seemed natural, at Fidelity, to call all older men who had been slave-owners "Marse." There were Marse Jerry Stubblefield, Marse Peter Rowlett, Marse Joe Meador, and a dozen others in my acquaintance area. Not a few whites followed the ex-slaves in this habit, so that now it seems perfectly natural for me to think of these elderly men with the title. Closely akin to this sort of title was "Uncle," a name applied to elderly people of either color. It was a combination of respect and apology for "Uncle's" decrepitude, or absent-mindedness, or shakiness on remembering some facts. Similarly, we called a good many women "Aunt," but not every Uncle's wife was so called; I suppose that the ancient subject of age was as acute at Fidelity as it is today in many another larger place. A very few older people were called "Daddy," a term of respect and wonderment, for old age, contrary to what many people think, /illegible/ was not at all common in those times. "Granny" I sometimes heard, but it was hardly respectful among us.

All these homely ways of speech we shared with most of our generation in all parts of the country; we also shared another custom, that of giving military or legal or other titles to people of local celebrity. I can recall only one officer of the Confederate Army that I ever knew well; he had been what would now be called a second lieutenant, but long before his death he was known locally as Captain Albritten. I occasionally saw another officer, a real Confederate captain, when I visited the county seat. But it was easy to advance any officer a notch or two, especially after the old boys became pretty scarce. It was even more common to call any one who had served as magistrate

"Squire" to the end of his life and not merely while he was in office. No county judge ever gave up his title with his office, and many a lawyer who had not held public office, especially after he began to show some age, was "Judge." "Colonel" as a title was not so common at Fidelity; we had not succumbed to the custom of putting this title on every auctioneer or prominent land-owner or just anybody whom we delighted to honor. "Doctor" was very limited and usually meant what it said; every good-sized area had a doctor worthy of the title, though it was hinted that some of the older men with the title had never seen inside a college but had taken up their bottles and boxes and started out on their profession. "Professor" was fairly widely distributed, and I still like the title, the one that I have never objected to. Of course, our professors were mere country school teachers or lanky singing-school masters, but it was a pretty fair pride to a man's business. All preachers were "Brothers" to us, in our own faith or outside. A good many men were left with plain titles or unhonored ones.

Fidelity was funny, as I have so often said, but it was no funnier than many places that are larger and of more note. My home for all my mature life is a good-sized city, where titles are dime a dozen. It seems unnecessary for a person to have a title of actual earning or conferring; if you like him, you call him "Doctor," or "Judge," or "Colonel." Any pastor of a church is ex-officio a doctor; any college teacher is also a doctor; any lawyer of reputation is "Judge." Kentucky colonels are pretty numerous in our town, and there may be an admiral or two; but an auctioneer would share the title, as would almost any other prominent person who deserves a title. There are so many doctors of all sorts that some of us who are entitled to the name try to avoid it unless it serves as collateral at the bank. It is a good name to impress on a new-comer to town, who may not know all the ropes yet. Fidelity and Bowling Green are marvelously alike.

"THE LENGTHENED SHADOW"

Emerson says that every great institution that mankind has devised is the lengthened shadow of one man. I have lived long enough to see the truth of this in many a Kentucky county and town. In our remote area the old gentleman who taught for a half century in our section became a symbol of what the "free" school was about. In a way I hated to see the little one-roomed school that bore his name swallowed up in the big consolidated school at Fidelity. But just such people as he determined the love for education that has made my Fidelity almost famous for the number of its boys and girls of a younger generation than I who have gradvated from college and technical and professional schools. Thanks to such old-time students and scholars and teachers, many a log cabin that I once knew produced a son or grandson that has honored his family and his neighborhood. I know two such teacher-scholars right now in a single college in another state who grew up as tenant-farmers' sons in my father's practice area, graduated from Fidelity High, and are now well along toward their doctorates. Probably not one student in a hundred who has attended Fidelity High ever heard the name of the old man who was so long a promoter of learning in our corner of the county, but I love to believe that some of the foundation stones of that school were there because of him.

Recently I have had occasion to see that I am getting old, for several of my own students have retired from active work as teachers. I could list school after school where English for years meant Miss Belle or Miss Mary or Miss Blanche or Miss Iva. Group after group of youngsters came to high school, grew up under the influence of a great teacher, and went out into a big world assured that education is a good thing, because the loved teacher taught it and lived it and died with nothing to take back.

Naturally, since I am a teacher, I can see the far-flung influence of these dedicated ones. And there are others, still fighting the good fight, that are as much institutions in themselves as the ones I have hinted at. One such man is not merely a long-time teacher; he is the neighborhood adviser, not by his own choice but because even hot-headed people will listen to his sane advice, He knows the strange folk bias of his people and respects it; he feels the value of retaining some of the individuality of pioneer days in our super-standardized world. No amount of praise can evaluate sucha character; only those who have watched him through a generation can know how much he means to his neighborhood, how much that neighborhood means to him.

For some years I have visited a country church that has sent out into the world some remarkable people. In that small neighborhood there are a few stalwart souls that are not in the least aware of their valiant service to their church, their neighborhood, their whole cultural area. Like Goldsmith's parson, they have stayed in their little corner of the world and never changed or wished to change their places. When I hear orators of the old school "horn the ground" in their praise of some popular idol, I turn back to my plain local people who have been so busy living and facing the world that they are perfectly unconscious of their greatness. What would the Pleasant Ridge or Elkhorn or Providence church and neighborhood have been without them?

One of the things I am always trying to tell my students in American literature is that there is no spot on earth that in itself is great until some great person loves it. There are hundreds of lakes and ponds in New England, many of them basically as pretty as Walden Pond, but no Henry David Thoreau lived beside them. I am told that many a European river famous in song and story is not so large as Drake's Creek or Blood River; all our streams lack is a great life lived near them, a great understanding of one small spot of earth.

T+C

AN UNSUNG HERO

My students have just been directed in their reading of an essay that paid tribute to the old-fashioned country merchant. Though the essay dealt largely with the New England version of this ubiquitous person, the picture, with a little touching up here and there, would fit the merchants at Fidelity or any other small village. For some reason that I cannot now recall, I have failed to mention this important man in this column, though I long ago went into great detail in talking about the very important village junto that met in the store, the loafers' j'int.

Our Fidelity always had at least two such important men, one of whom ran the drug store and postoffice; the other one had the general store, much more elaborate than the drugstore-postoffice. In fact, then as now the country store either had what you wanted or would get it for you, whether you wanted a horse collar or a tailored suit. Our general merchant lived long and represented just about everything that any merchant of those days should have been. He read widely but was always modest about his reading; he was prominent in the church and Sunday School without being partisan. Having to serve people of all faiths or none kept him safely within the bounds of reason. Abstruse points in theology were discussed in his store, but he was a listener rather than a participant in the heated battles, with heat in proportion to the lack of formal education on the part of the debaters. He knew something about law, too, and could draw up deeds, wills, mortgages, and other legal papers. He was a Notary Public and owned a queer-looking seal that I always wanted to use as did the false Prince in Mark Twain's PRINCE AND PAUPER; to crack nuts with. He, one of the few people in our area to be so famous, had a bank account at the distant county seat and could draw a check for a hundred dollars as

easily as most of us could spend a quarter. He had a safe in which his money and valuable papers were kept; in addition, he nearly always had money in his pocket, which he would jingle as his part of the show when ardent religionists or politicians got red-faced and impatient with the lack of gray matter in their opponents' tousled heads. Though he saw all the feats of strength performed by the loafers and watched eagerly the wrestlers and horse-shoe pitchers, he never took sides. He was a store-keeper, not a ward-heeler. Besides, somebody might want to renew his acquaintance with some manufactured tobacco while the wrestling match was in progress; the merchant would have to get it for his customer and would have to take his eye off the contestants.

And the constant entry of the same talkers and story-tellers must have tried his patience, even though a few of them would occasionally bring some eggs or a green hide or buy something from the rather dusty counters. Election day brought big crowds, crowds that sometimes got rough. These people were always thirsty. Somebody had to keep the water bucket filled; who could do this better than the merchant or a hired boy like me, for I made sometimes as much as seventy-five cents a day by clerking in the general store on election day. Big days like this one brought in lots of dirt and created a lot of tin cans where the hungry fellows had to have some oysters and crackers. Rather cheese also added a lot of cracker crumbs to the floor, and the merchant had to sweep them up and out into the so-called street. Once in a great while a drunk came in and wallowed on the counter or before the stove, telling the other fellows how much the government was missing by not following his advish. It took some diplomacy to get the drunk outside and let the whittlers resume their age-old task of reducing to atoms the pine planks that were always around in those days. Scholar, diplomat, jackleg lawyer, banker, and all the rest of his many-sided character, he lived and died with few people recognizing his worth. With him died a whole age.

the merchant

"ALL WOOL AND A YARD WIDE"

Back in earlier days it was complimentary to cloth to say that it was "all wool and a yard wide." That term was understood everywhere; it was a mark of being genuine. It was easy to transfer this accurate description of cloth to anything else that was all that it should be. Many a person was so called, and he liked the compliment, too. In evaluating some of our inheritances, it would be wise if we would apply this standard of measurement. Not all of our left-overs from former times are good; mere age does not make them valuable. On the other hand, we must not ignore some older phase of our lives merely because it has passed away.

Though I have never become a collector of actual antiques, I have looked on while people with more money than I have ever had have added to their store. Frequently these relics of our earlier days are genuine artistic reminders of what more primitive people made and valued. Often untrained, they sometimes acquired a skill that would attract attention in any great age of the world. They went beyond mere necessity and made works of art, even though they probably died without knowing that they had done anything unusual. Many a family cherishes these evidences of skill and artistry as about the only tangible form of inheritance.

In our eagerness to honor unknown artists we often forget that there was no universal skill among our ancestors. If Fidelity was typical, not more than one man in ten could do more than botch work with saw and plane and drawing knife. Another phrase that everybody knows tells about all one's fingers being thumbs. We had hosts of people who had plenty of supernumerary thumbs. Every-day objects like chicken coops and horse-troughs often failed to have a straight in/ line in their construction. Even a paling fence around a yard had

lines that Euclid never knew about. Of course, we did not have classy material to work with, and that may have somewhat injured our artistry. Though there were several chimneys in our neighborhood that would still take prizes, many of them only approximated perfection. I have seen home-made cabins that were almost exact pictures of their owners and builders--with no feature worked out completely, with no straight lines, with angles that were far from right. Fortunately, most of our thumb-fingered workmen did not attempt to do fine work like the making of furniture. Later generations have been saved the embarrassment of having a clumsy old table or dresser or chest of drawers that has been kept only because Grandpa made it, back in early days.

Fidelity people were all wool and a yard wide, in character much more than in skill. The virtues we knew were very primitive ones, but an astonishingly large number of people possessed them: honesty, industry, neighborliness. Many of the virtues that today seem basic were present but in somewhat undeveloped forms. Cleanliness, we were told, was next to godliness. It would be unfair to judge cleanliness of a half century ago by any more recent standards. In the first place, water was not common enough and had to be drawn up from a well or cistern or toted from a spring. No wonder a weekly all-over bath in a washpan seemed adequate. I never knew anybody who was actually sewed into his underwear for the winter, but I have known children whose mothers removed winter underwear gradually so that the youngsters would not catch cold. That is, long-handled winter underwear would be shortened inch by inch, with the family scissors. As in our artistry, we should not be judged too harshly, for certain present-day standards had not arrived. But it is foolish to transfer our present standards into those times and praise or blame people for following them or ignoring them. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

"AND BATTLES LONG AGO"

We who have lived through three wars since 1914 somehow do not attach such romantic ideas to war as we did when we were younger and heard about the Civil War from old fellows who apparently had forgotten about most of the horrors of that time and remembered only the human or humorous side. There was a halo about the head of the humblest veteran of that war; he did not seem to be mad of the same sort of clay as the rest of us. No matter how poor a life he had led after the great adventure was over, he still had our worshipful admiration. And though he may have never been in an actual conflict or may have done such ordinary duty as guarding a commissary, he still was of an older and braver breed of men. And he was the last one to disturb that halo. The way he could roll the names of places we had read about in our history books made us know that we were with a person who had made history, who had, single-handedly, won a battle.

We younger ones were somewhat responsible for this glorification of war, for we would not let a chance pass without hearing, for the ninetieth time, about our uncle's escapades while he participated in four full years of a Sunday School picnic. Even when he mentioned death, it was a cheerful sort of comment, as if it did not amount to much. Gruesome accounts of shallow burials, accounts that I have verified many times since then, seemed to our uncle half funny. The horrible inconveniences of a war that apparently nobody had planned for were just a part of a four-year picnic, with nobody especially to blame. And, because of the cheerfulness of our uncle, we grew up wishing we could have been born earlier and shared with him some of his experiences. Many people, much older than we, were just about as realistic as we children and kept alive for far too long the romantic aspects of man's inhumanity to man.

Maybe, as a famous novelist has said repeatedly, the Civil War was the last gentleman's war. You stood pretty close to your enemy; when your gun missed, if he had not meanwhile got you, you could pick up a stone and do a lot of damage. Some of those Civil War lines were so close together that you wonder how anybody ever survived the battles. And, of course, the casualties were tremendous, sickeningly so. And even the slightly wounded often died of gangrene or froze to death before they could be rescued from where they fell. I am writing this essay near the anniversary of Fort Donelson, where blood of my blood was represented. In the bitter winter weather men who were wounded were burned from leaf fires; the next day ice was forming on all the fallen. But even all this gory history failed to impress people so much as they would now. In the four wars that I have known the romance died a-borning. America tried to whip up a lot of fervor in the brief Spanish-American War, but typhoid and tropical jungles somehow stifled some of the ardor. The gruesome experiences of our boys in World War I, especially in the severe winter of 1917-1918, did not produce any sentimental ballads such as might have come out of the Civil War. And the similar experiences in the two later wars farther removed war from the realm of the imaginative writer. Somehow it does not seem so poetic to be shooting at an enemy whom you cannot see as it did when two brave men met face to face and slew each other manfully. All of us now, I suppose, look upon war as a fearful thing, to be entered into only to avoid national disaster and not to poetize about. The boys who have always had to do the fighting have seldom led the procession of those who glorified war; they knew too well what it was all about and agreed with Sherman in his famous definition.

"AND THE SMELL COMES POURING OUT"

Paul Laurence Dunbar, in one of his inimitable poems about Negro life, tells about Mammy's cooking; when she opens the stove door, the smell comes pouring out. I often tell my students in literature that too few poets have valued highly enough the sense of smell. Somehow many people regard this sense, which is so well-developed in the lower animals, as something earthy, not worthy of song or story. Of course, poets will talk about odors from roses and other high-falutin flowers, but they often fail to recognize how deep-seated the sense of smell is still in even the most civilized of us.

Let's take a tip from Paul Laurence Dunbar and go to Mammy's kitchen. Very young readers of this column could here take Chaucer's advice and turn over another leaf. Oldsters, however, will want to review the smells of cookery, good and bad, that tie us back to other times. Take the small of frying sausage, for example; there is no suggestion of moonlight and roses and orange blossoms or magnolias here. The odor means good food that will stick to the ribs on a cold winter day, of tasty food that will be able to weather the toughest winds as the wood is chopped and the stock fed and watered, even of a whole day in the woods or fields hunting or wood-chopping. A whiff of this odor brings back the old smokehouse, with its array of sacks of sausage hanging near the hams and middlings and shoulders, with plenty of lard not too far away.

That next odor is from half-moon pies, dried peaches or apples that you may have helped peel and core and slice away back in the summer. There is nothing sissy about these fried pies. I rejoice that some bakeries have capitalized on old-fashioned tastes and supply certain concessions at some of my mountain places with small replicas of the pies that "Mother used to make." Of course, since they are now sold

and are wrapped in some sort of modern plastic or waxed paper, the smell of hot, frying pies does not assail your nose. But the flavor cannot be long hidden, and I have found these small pies worthy descendants of the ones that often cheered a cold winter day.

From the big fireplace, either in the kitchen or the living room, comes a strange odor as something boils and boils in an iron pot. That is lye hominy, one of the staples of older farm homes, especially in winter. The corn grains had been soaked in lye for a time; then it was necessary to boil them to make the skins slip off, as well as to remove most of the lye itself. I said most deliberately, for nobody would have liked hominy if it had completely lost its lye flavor. That alkaline smell spans a half century or more in my nose's memory; do you know that odor?

There are odors that come from the kitchen that are far from pleasant and would be unwanted memories but for their merely being preliminary to good food after the first cooking odors have passed away. Green beans, for instance, give off an odor that reminds us moderns of some of the horrible smells of modern industrial plants. Who would ever guess that such vegetables could turn into such an inviting plateful as green beans properly cooked with bacon? Beets, too, when in the first stages of cookery give off poisonous odors that suggest anything except the luscious, colorful vegetables when they are served. And old-timers will remember the vile odors of poke as it is being cooked in a mess of wild greens.

Since my sense of smell is still a very primitive one, I am often starved to death by noon, for my classroom receives the smell of fresh bread from a bakery several blocks away, if the wind is right, and from our college cafeteria, not too far on the other side. If appetite is sauce for food, I am normally "sauced up" for my noon meal, what with the inroads on my sense of smell for a few hours before the clock strikes twelve.

T+C

"CHANGE"

In talking about "change," I am not rehashing the many things I have said about the swift passage of time and the days that used to be. Instead, I want to reintroduce an old-time word for fear some younger people have not heard it, as well as to remind the oldsters that there used to be such a word. Now, at Fidelity, "change" meant what very proper people call "dessert." Of course, in the older days, you took your dessert right on the plate that you had used for whatever had come before it. But semi-proper folks had learned to take up your plate and bring a new plate or such-like with the final course. Try to still the gnawing of your appetite while I tell of some of these "changes."

On cold winter days, such as we have had so many of in 1958, no change was better than half-moon pies. They might be of dried apples or dried peaches; they might be fried, two at a time, in deep grease; they might be served hot or cold; dry or with a tangy sauce to pour over them. Anyway, we all agreed with our neighbor who declared that he liked only two kinds of pies: "hot 'uns and cold 'uns."

A standard type of change was a bowl of canned fruit, especially peaches, attended by a slice or hunk of "pudding," as we called a plain cake. Frequently, these same things were set by your plate to begin with, so that you could be looking at them while you decided how many of the seven kinds of meats and an equal number of vegetables you could hold on the first courses, before it was time for change. Of course, there were always seconds for dessert as for anything else on the table that was said to be groaning under the weight of its foods, just as the too-eager eater often groaned shortly after mealtimes.

Now, cake was standard equipment for weekends and for such bright spots on the calendar as birthdays and visits by the preacher or relatives.

It was regarded as tacky to have just one kind of cake. I am not enough a home economics expert to name them all; my job was in the consuming end of the cake industry, not in the production end. But I have sat at tables where as many as six or seven kinds of cake were served, with almost every flavor under the sun. Often, on the day after such a feed, I was under the weather. I was often referred to as a sickly boy, but you should have seen me when the change came around. I was never very fond of meats, but I could hold my own with the hired hand on desserts.

A standard semi-liquid form of change was what was called by all sorts of names: egg-nog, boiled custard, floating Island, float, etc., etc. But, like Shakespeare's rose by any other name, each one did its share to make the immediate present all bliss, and who cares for tomorrow, anyway, when cakes and custard are around? Naughty people, even at Fidelity, often spiked the boiled custard; to give it flavor, they said. Less naughty ones managed to consume their share of the egg-nog with nothing stronger in it than flavoring extracts. Of course, few took the drink straight and had to add several slices of rich cake to be sure of a man-sized stomach-ache afterwards.

Fried pies had more aristocratic relatives in the pie family. Fruit pies, especially blackberry pies, make my mouth water to contemplate. Custard pies of all sorts were good enough, but nothing that culinary arts have devised can beat a Blackberry Cobbler, and I have capitalized it to show its importance. Very nice people thought cobbler was home-folks stuff, but nobody could make me feel more like a prince than by serving blackberry cobbler in unlimited quantities.

Are you ready for a change? You bet; bring on the whole outfit. I think I could get around about a dozen units of change.

BRIEF OF THE REMEDIES FOR STOMACH-ACHE

Last week I treated you to a perfectly skin-filling meal, or the last course, change. Maybe I should have added today's article to that one as a serious afterthought. Anyway, here is what to do when you have digestive troubles, especially after eating too much.

The simplest and most-used method is to drink some hot water, as hot as you can stand it. That may help allay your pains and help digestion to take over again. If you are in great misery, let the water be only warmish, so it will act as an emetic. Of course, if you have a bottle of ipecac around, that is faster still and may save your life when you have swallowed something that needs to be brought back up. If the illness is not so severe, a few cupfuls of hot water will solve your problems. Once, when my brother had eaten too many sweet muffins, Mother set the teakettle on some coals on the fireplace and started to heat some water to relieve his pains. He still says that the first cupful was nearly ice-cold; the sixth and last one scalded him as it went down. Then he peacefully went back to bed without a pain, ready for more sweet muffins the next time they came around.

Persistent stomach-ache needs some steady heat. Before the advent of hot-water bottles there were useful substitutes. A bag of salt, heated sufficiently, will add warmth for a very long time, not to mention a few blisters if it is too hot. Hot corn-meal mush is another good remedy of this prolonged heating. I have known a brick, heated by or in the fire, wrapped up and placed on the trouble spot to alleviate some of the misery. ¶ Now, of course, some continued anguish calls for sterner measures. That was the time to use the blister plaster, a species of torture that no poet like Dante seems to have mentioned as a possible means of punishing sins. That smelly black substance, called learnedly Cantharides, certainly lived up to

its ancient reputation. Some of the messy black stuff was spread on a cloth and placed on your tummy. Within a few minutes you felt that there was a convention of ants and mosquitoes and similar vermin observing Old Home Week on the tender parts of your tummy. There was a certain time to allow this misery to continue; then the plaster was removed, and the poultice was applied. This poultice was designed to raise a blister on the area so lately the stomping ground of all the biting, stinging critters in the world. Corn-meal mush or salt, properly wrapped in a cloth, took the place of the blister plaster and started its work. Some minutes later, when this second infernal machine was withdrawn, you had a blister about a half inch thick the size of the original plaster. Then this huge blister had to be punctured at several places, to let the lymph run out. This whole round of torture was known as a "counter irritant," to relieve the inner trouble. A tummy ache that still was around when this murderous torture was over was a tummy ache indeed. For days afterwards you had a red tummy, almost too tender to touch your clothes, but you had lived to tell the tale. And, the worst thing of all, you probably did not remember what gastronomic feats had caused the original ache, for the seven kinds of cakes or six kinds of pies or four and five glasses of boiled custard enticed you again, and you might have to suffer again the whole round of torture, from hot water drunk in quantity to blister plasters and all their disgusting misery.

I have not exhausted the standard remedies of my older days. I have just remembered too vividly the whole round of suffering and feel that I had better stop before I swear off eating cakes and pies and such for the remaining eating days of my life.

THE THIRD "R"

Not too long ago, back at Fidelity and similar places, there existed the THREE R'S, basic things that stood for EDUCATION. (It is necessary to capitalize these to show how very important they were.) In those strange days it took very little to establish a score-card for being SOMEBODY(another necessary capital). One of the very few rules that established this very desirable condition dealt with the three R's. Though dozens of people whom I knew then could not read and write, nobody was proud of such a condition; the strange thing to me, then and now, was that few who escaped this basic learning ever made up for it later. If people did not learn to read and write in school, they rarely learned anywhere. The third R, arithmetic, was an even better mark of being smart, for many an illiterate could solve problems in his head that would have stumped many of the rest of us who boasted of our ability to read and spell and write. It seems to me now, more than a half century away from Fidelity, that arithmetic was the "measure of a man" in a real sense; if you did not know numbers, you were plain dumb, even though you could spell and pronounce words of four or more syllables. Naturally, if you could also put down on something the results of your mathematical thinking, you were just that much better off.

Before we educators got afraid that it would be bad to follow some method consistently, we learned our arithmetic in a country school in an approved way. I dare say all older readers of this column will recognize the steps. First we counted, either by actually placing objects on the teacher's desk and touching each one or by monotonously saying the numbers abstractly, certainly through "ninety-nine and one's a hundred." On our slates or tablets or the painted planks that served as blackboards we wrote the figures so early that I do not know when I learned the priceless ten marks that so simplified arithmetic.

One teacher of blessed memory, as I have told before, had us to bring some pebbles from the brook(except she said "rocks from the branch") and in many a day of play taught us the four fundamental processes of adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing. We played with those little quartz pebbles until they shone like jewels, and that is what they were in teaching us the joys of knowing and manipulating numbers.

Soon we could add columns on the blackboard or those same slates mentioned a while ago. And we could soon subtract and multiply and divide. A real joy was the learning of the multiplication table through the 12 times 12's. It was easy to remember the ~~fives~~ 5's, for almost the merest dumbell could sing-song the combinations. It was considerably harder to do ~~sixes~~ 6's and ~~sevens~~ 7's and ~~eights~~ 8's. However, I soon learned that the ~~nines~~ 9's were almost as easy as the ~~tens~~ 10's, for you just left one off each time from what the ~~tens~~ 10's would be. Nothing was ever made that was so handy as our painted-planks used for blackboards: they were already laid off for numbers. It was real fun to fill up the black planks; sometimes we got so enthusiastic that we wrote numbers on the unpainted planks clear down to the floor.

Personally, I have never felt any bigger, in all my ages of going to school and teaching, than I did the day our teacher explained to us the meaning of Least Common ~~Denominator~~ Multiple and ~~Greatest~~ Least Common ~~Multiple~~ Denominator. I at once saw a good moral in those terms and have used it ever since. To be able to reduce things to some system, so that there are few or no excentions, seemed then and still seems a miracle, however hard the problem may be in actuality.

After the fundamentals we had fractions, both common and decimal, and percentage and ratio and proportion and mensuration, so that we actually could tell what and why there was a bushel of something. We learned tables of weights and measures so well that I sometimes say myself to sleep with them, using this method instead of watching sheep jump over fences. That third R was something special and I did not soon forget its lessons.

"AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING"

If someone in Fidelity had said that our language and all our customs are constantly changing, he would have been questioned or probably snubbed. We were told by some of our leaders that things are just as they have always been, that there is no new thing under the sun. But it took only a few years of living to see that language, for instance, had undergone a great deal of development, for good or bad. Our elderly relatives, as smart as we and sometimes smarter about us well educated, just did not tell like us. It did not take us long to discover that they were as sincere in their use of strange words and expressions as we were in our ordinary speech. And, being the people they were, they were not easily laughed out of their speech, probably regarding us a young upstarts that had strayed away from what was the only correct way to speak. Both of us were hopelessly narrow and refused to compromise. And thus we lived, the younger generation at war with an older one, each sure that he and only he was right.

Who could have guessed then that my whole life work would be in the field of speech and that I would come to love the language of the elders and even of ancient ones, whose speech was far stranger than the usage of Aunt Mary or Grandpa? And who would have guessed that I would love to watch the rise and fall of speech in my own time and enjoy its being a continuous battle for supremacy? No one had told me that the words I often laughed at and even many of the ones that I used naturally had lived a long time and often bore the traces of ages as far beyond Columbus and his discovery as we were on this side of that momentous event. We somewhat sophisticated ones laughed, courteously, at people who said "hit" for "it" but said "guess" along with these same strange people. And yet, not too many ayes back, both of these words were good, with no suggestion of any time coming

when "guess" would be branded as a left-over peculiar to America and "hit" would be classed as an ignorant word, not to be used by any one who pretended to education. Even the educated ones of my youth laughed at words that are again in respected use because genuinely educated people refused to let them die. A case in point is "raise," as applied to people. It is nonsense to say that the word is crude or regional. Many people of prominence, in all areas of America, would say this word and think nothing of it. Because of some restraint that developed when we learned to write, some might not write the word, but they would think it and then translate it into "rear," to make the memory of some old teacher greener.

Nothing intrigues me so much as this changing habit of ours. We get set on some way of talking or doing something and come to believe that our way is the only one. Superciliously we say our learned words, probably watching the audience to see how they react to our high-brow language or attitude. But, if we live long enough and look about us, we may find that our pet expression is no better and no worse with people who really know and care than the ones we so disdainfully avoided. I have had teachers who would have regarded "research," accented on the first syllable, as worse than a violation of half of the Ten Command-ments. And yet, in a group of eminent scholars in the English field, you will find probably a third of them using this outlawed form and, by their very eminence, daring you to take exception. Not all the words or pronunciations that we once knew are in this category of disputed usages, but there are literally thousands of words in America that have two to four pronunciations each, with no ugly tag of igno-rance or colloquialism or regionalism attached. We English teachers have developed a folklore of our own, making ourselves believe that our pet ways of doing things is a sample of the Law and the Prophets. Not all folklore is a product of illiterate people.

WHAT CAUSES THIS WEATHER?

Even the best of weather prophets will have to admit that the winter of 1957-58 was a queer one. There have been a few colder ones, many winters have brought much more rain, and there have been seasons with much more snow; but the combination of days on end that remained damp and cold have stumped all but the stoutest-hearted weather men of Podunk and similar places. Of course, if the local weather man cannot or will not remember typical winters, he can always fall back on what Grandpap said about weather when he was a boy. Poor old Grandpap must have been called on many times in this winter, for we smart observers who put down our observations—including, grudgingly, the Weather Bureau operators themselves—can find nothing like it in our experiences and have to fall back on previous observations by accurate recorders of the weather.

And that always brings up a question that is sure to be asked: "What caused this unusual weather?" Such a question at Fidelity would have been downright wicked; the most natural answer would have been, "It's just natural." Of course, that is right, for everything that happens is from nature; therefore, it is natural. But persistent questioners want some sort of logical or satisfactory answer. They normally ask again, trying to find some solution to the puzzle. Weather observers down our way were not very kind to those who questioned the explanations given. A few bad boys would make their own records and hold them in reserve, not to dispute the weather sayings of the graybeards to their faces but to tell the other boys. This sort of scientific observation, however, seemed to be futile, for nearly everybody would continue to quote Grandpap or the other all-knowing weather prophet.

Here are some solutions that I have heard offered. I cannot vouch for the truth of them, but some people I have known believe them. At Fidelity everybody and his friends were Democrats, rock-ribbed and unvarying. Often strange weather was attributed to the Republicans. That was hardly fair to the opposite party, however, for the Republicans were in power, nationally, almost all the time. There was a a deep snow sometimes in Democratic times, as in 1886, with Cleveland in the White House, when the snow to end all snows came. We were told by aging Confederate veterans that bombing caused heavy rains in Civil War days, and nearly everybody believed it. I have even seen that one in books. Some years ago I heard a drought of sorts attributed to the presence of large numbers of radios in my immediate section. Those same radios must have lost their rabbit foot, for, with five times as many in the same area, the great flood of 1937 came. Now it seems to be Sputniks and our own grapefruit-sized moons that are causing trouble. What can we expect when moons big enough to hold human passengers take off for the moon proper? We may have to take refuge on the highest mountains or start digging for water or pile up enough coal to warm things up. I am not an authority on the effect of radios, Sputniks, and such like on weather and cannot say whether we should look out for dry or wet or hot or cold weather. Anyway, there are those who do know, judging by their talk; if you want to know, ask them. I can find no mention of such influences in my old family almanac, though there is much talk about storms arising in the Rocky Mountains and moving eastward, pinpointing for Fidelity and elsewhere the exact day there will be rain or snow or drought. I still wonder why the makers of patent medicines know the ins and outs of such a difficult subject as weather, but I have known people who swore by their almanacs and calendars and refused to believe ~~them~~ their ^ when it rained on a day marked fair. When the Weather Bureau is as much believed as these patent-medicine people, it will be a great world.

"I SAW A ROBIN"

The annual reporting of Robins is now on and has been since late in the winter. "The Robin," says some childish book read when you were a small brat, "is the sign of spring." It is in lots of books, and, therefore, it is gospel truth! Of course, the books were written truthfully, but the authors lived much farther north than Kentucky. The Robin is, and has been in my whole lifetime experience, a permanent resident here. In winter it is sometimes less common around towns and cities, but back in the swamps, on the worst winter days, it is present and very much alive. And there is rarely a winter when it is not quite obvious on our lawns and on college and school campuses. Of course, if one appears, unless it almost bites a person, it is not seen until the right kind of spring-like day arrives. Then the telephone rings, and some sweet-voiced person says, gleefully: "The Robin is back; spring is here." I sometimes ask where it had been, but I get such a cold answer that I usually let the informer have his say before I solemnly and pompously, probably, say that the species stays around all the time, though it is more obvious and more numerous in early spring. Here is a confirmation of my statements: On forty Christmas Bird Counts taken at Bowling Green, the Robin appears on thirty-five; it was found in the winters of those five, but not on the one day in the fields and woods. It has appeared on twelve of the thirteen counts at Christmas in Mammoth Cave National Park, with the astounding total of 1984 Robins on December 29, 1958! But those who have been brought up on the old idea that Robins are signs of spring will never give in. What are records in the face of printed sentences in primary books taught by Miss Mary of sainted memory?

Of course, the question about a Robin's staying or going is a

minor one, hardly worth refuting or discussing. But Robins can be harbingers of something else, or the attitude about them can. For a half century I have been trying to teach grammar. About half my time is taken up with showing how some of the crazy things in old or primary textbooks were based on very few observations and were perpetuated by ignorant authors and more ignorant teachers, as if there were no possible question about their accuracy. Rules for spelling, for instance, are among our most ridiculous trumpery in school. Somebody long ago, with no suspicion of the origin of English, saw a few words that seemed to be alike in the way they formed their plurals. Forthwith a rule was made, and then the exceptions had to be listed, with no apparent hint that the rule was too restricted. Most children that I have taught remember, faithfully, the rule and are willing to suffer martyrdom to uphold it. It has been in the family so long that it is sacred and must not be questioned. And there are equally silly rules of grammar, made by someone with meager education but marvelous self-importance; his rash judgments a few hundred years ago seem like gospel truth to present-day learners.

My favorite story about this Robin business pertains to biology. A very scholarly teacher that I know presented the snakes of Kentucky and then mentioned that only ~~three~~ two in central Kentucky--the Copperhead and the Rattlesnake--are poisonous; in extreme western Kentucky, from Fidelity to the Mississippi River, there is found the Cottonmouth, which may stray as far as the central Kentucky streams. So far, so good. When this had been presented calmly, as by one having authority, an old-maid student said that her brother said the Black Snake and several others are poisonous. The teacher tried to persuade her otherwise. Later in that same school term, when a question involving snakes was asked, the naive lady asked: "Do you want me to answer this as you said or to tell what is so?" "Spring is here; I saw a Robin." The book--and my brother--said so.

1-C

LOCH'S BACKYARD--I

One of the privileges of age is to look backward. This column is now old enough to qualify as ancient as columns go. With the next essay, there will have been twelve hundred of the interminable series. The column, and its author, may be pardoned for taking a backward look.

In September, 1935, when the first essay appeared under this heading, folklore was still regarded as something funny or odd and concerned with strange people who lived across the tracks or down by the river. It was supposed that only primitive people had any folklore and that the rest of us, particularly the educated ones, just had no such nonsense in their lives. Some of the learned journals were partly responsible for this attitude, for they dealt largely with the most primitive peoples now living. If some daring scholar could be persuaded to risk his life, he was encouraged to visit some cannibalistic tribes in tropical jungles and learn all he could about the half-animal existence there and duly report his findings in a learned journal. In our own country similar scholars sought out the poorest, most ignorant families or settlements and fairly reveled in the superstitions and ignorance he found. And wide-eyed scholars who had had no such experience had the same sort of thrill as elegant ladies once experienced when they went slumming. For years I was repulsed by the folklore of such learned magazines and kept my peace. What had been reported was true, I am sure, but it was only part of the truth. Along about the time this column was born, hosts of folklorists became conscious of folklore as something found in most human breasts and not merely in the lives of the most primitive people. Fortunately for this column, that time pleased the author to write about common things in everyday lives, of people who are not naked savages and who may be among the very best people now alive.

The young man who suggested the idea of the column is now the president of my own college and has always been a staunch supporter of my efforts to present fairly the customs of our own people, of people neither naked nor cannibals. But for this encouragement from one close by, the column would have never started. Immediately after the first essay, in September, 1935, fan mail began and has never ceased since then. I did not know then that I had struck a popular theme; a year later, when I had planned to stop, the letters had so piled up that I was requested to continue telling about passing institutions and quaint characters and deep-seated folk psychology. As a result, the years have come and gone, and the column has gone on like Tennyson's brook or the old Grandfather's clock. If you who read this essay happen to be ~~one~~ of those who have encouraged the author, you must take part of the blame for the long-lasting series of folklore essays.

A very great compliment has been paid the column by other folklorists. Prominent scholars in the field, like Dr. Herbert Halpert, now dean of Blackburn College but formerly the head of the English department of Murray State College, and my own lieutenant, Dr. D. K. Wilgus, professor of English at Western, have told the members of the American Folklore Society about how the column has become a fixture in county newspapers. Eight other states that I know of have borrowed this idea and have columns of varying ages, run by students of folklore in state and private colleges. These authors, like the present one, have felt that the public ought to know what is valuable in folklore and are eager to share their knowledge with collectors and interpreters. In this fourth of a century thousands of people have contributed their own experiences, and even their collections, to be used by scholars in this field. Folklore has, thus, been saved by the folk because some cranky scholars started something that interests most of us.

LOOKING BACKWARD--II

Though I have not made any especial effort to introduce folklore into the schools, many teachers have written me of their being inspired to use local folk customs and beliefs as bases for English themes and for exercises in research. I have rejoiced at seeing many of these collections and interpretations in print: in county newspapers, in our state magazine, THE KENTUCKY FOLKLORE RECORD, and in national magazines, like HOOSIER FOLKLORE. Once a student is shown how vital a folk custom is, he begins to search out some commonplace event and see it as a genuine relic of other times. One such boy, whose papers have appeared in national magazines, studied the old-fashioned Baptist Association and set down, before all the old-timers had died off, the actual flavor of what these great events used to be. Dr. Halpert was responsible for this excellent bit of research and is to be commended for his years of teaching Kentucky students the value of our folk heritage. I can claim no part of this; I merely mention it as a sample of what is being done in the more modern methods of studying our ways as folk.

A very excellent study has been made by another scholar who has spent some years in Kentucky. Miss Marie Campbell, originally from Illinois, later from Georgia, and now from New Jersey, has recently written a whole book on folklore as it has appeared in Kentucky newspapers, from our earliest days as a wilderness settlement to our own mid-century. She has found countless echoes of the foolishness of editors and correspondents, of early quack medicines and remedies, of burial customs and other strange ways in which we have expressed ourselves as a rather distinctive people.

It is not an exaggeration to say that our KENTUCKY FOLKLORE RECORD has done more for folklore than any other publication in the history of Kentucky. It has looked upon the whole field of folklore and not

merely at the doings and sayings of unstandard people. And it has attracted the attention of two groups of people who know most about folklore: scholars in the field and plain people who have lived long enough to see their own cherished customs changing into something different, whether rightly or wrongly. The president of our state folklore society is a living example of the newer method of studying folklore. Dr. Leonard Roberts, of Union College, at Barbourville, has done an enormous amount of collecting in mountain counties and has especially centered his interest on one family and all of its folk ways: songs, stories, superstitions, customs. To hear him discuss his finds "south of Hell-for-Sartain," the area he has studied so long and so well, and to hear some of his actual folk characters tell stories and sing songs--these are convincing illustrations of what can be done when scholarly collectors and interested "collectees" meet.

With this twelve-hundredth essay, then, the writer of this column acknowledges a great debt to hundreds of correspondents, to dozens of scholars, to nearly a hundred newspapers, and to unknown and unnamed readers--all of whom have helped make this column. A strange indebtedness, too, exists that I do not know how to pay: I am thankful for having lived in a time when we have taken a more sensible attitude toward our cultural backgrounds, when we have been willing to look at history accurately but also sympathetically. This phase of our study is still in its infancy. Such scholars as Dr. Richard Dorson, of Indiana University, a famous historian and an equally famous folklorist, will help to develop this sort of accurate-sympathetic study of Americans in all their quaint, fascinating ways of doing and saying and hoping and fearing. It would be great to know what changes will take place in the next twenty-three years of folklore study. Certainly this column and its writer will be eager to see every step forward in knowing and interpreting our folkways.